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UNHAND ME!

By OSCAR EDGAR WINBURN

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Unhand Me!

A COMMENT ON RELIGION

BY

OSCAR EDGAR WINBURN

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Original Drawings
by the Author

1905
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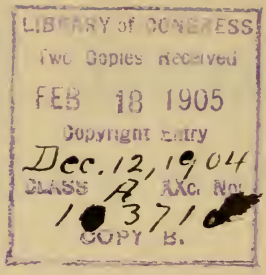

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OSCAR EDGAR WINBURN

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PREFACE.

GLADSTONE said: "The century can be summed up in one phrase—Unhand me!" And in this determined revolt against everything that seems to interfere in any way with the freedom of the individual and his thoughts can be found the explanation of almost all the important developments of our times. The cry which Martin Luther raised in 1517 has been echoing and reechoing until its volume has become a menace to established conservatism.

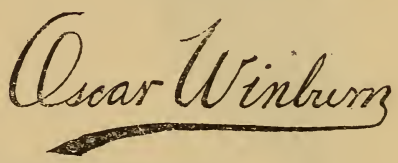
The day of blind following of an unexplained leadership is fast passing. Education and religious liberty have caused men to become suspicious of many so-called "authoritative" truths, and never in the world's history has man been so anxious and eager to know the truth.

Of course, the man who does his own thinking may not in every instance think rightly, but he is never so unfit for citizenship as the individual who allows another to do his thinking for him. This slow-moving tide of individualism cannot be stemmed, and self-elected "authorities" should harken to the cry of the times, stop shouting worn-out shibboleths, and begin to teach the blind to see and the deaf to hear.

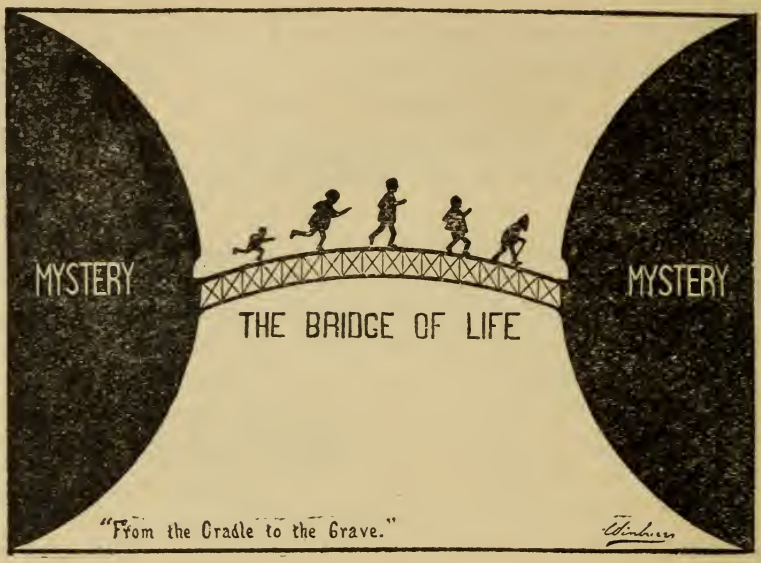
In issuing this book I have no desire to add to the already enormous mass of "orthodox" rubbish which fills our library shelves. It contains a plain, blunt statement of what one individual, in his heart of hearts, really thinks about religion. My study of this subject, I believe, has been thorough and honest. I have made as earnest an effort to get at the real truth and purposes of

established religious teachings and customs as possible. And my deductions have been arrived at without malice or prejudice. If they seemed to me to be wrong I have said so, regardless of consequences. And if I have missed the mark it is not because I have not diligently sought it.

And I, therefore, hereby solemnly swear that the contents of this book—UNHAND ME!—are as near as possible "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

(Signed) 

NEW YORK, January 1, 1905.



THIS drawing, perhaps, best illustrates the ideas advanced in the following pages. A human atom in the shape of a babe emerges from an impenetrable tomb of "mystery." Its vision at first is able to grasp only a portion of the journey ahead. Later on this human atom advances to the school age, when, filled with enthusiasm and ambition, it seeks to advance as rapidly as possible toward manhood. Young manhood finds this human atom, flushed with victory over the simple problems that have so far confronted him, eager for a trial at the more complex problems of life. At the prime of life we find this human atom somewhat cooled in his enthusiasm. He begins to look with suspicion on the great mass of "mystery" that completely envelops the end of his course. At middle age he begins to seriously wonder if the "religion of his fathers" has rightly defined the meaning of that all-important question, What is death? Old age apparently reconciles this human atom to the fact that death is inevitable and should be met as philosophically as possible. At no time, from the cradle to the grave, does he really know one iota of fact in regard to the secrets which may begin at either end of the Bridge of Life.

UNHAND ME!

IN EXPLANATION.

E are becoming a race of hypocrites. Perhaps the most important cause for this tendency is that certain fundamental customs and ideas which were once regarded as true and sacred have been proved to be false or improbable. The efforts of science have been thrown like a searchlight upon the mysteries surrounding many so-called "inspired truths" and "supernatural occurrences," and the result has been that instead of finding corroborative evidence we have found footprints of inexcusable human "cussedness." Yet, in the face of these revelations, we cling to these false ideas because they are too "holy" and "sacred" to be discarded. We profess things that we, in our hearts, do not believe, and this is hypocrisy.

There are also other alleged phenomena, regarding which the advocates of the various forms of religion claim to possess supernatural knowledge, which as yet the searching eye of science has been unable to explain. Whether these phenomena really exist or not is purely a matter of conjecture.

For instance, modern Christianity makes no effort to prove the existence of a material heaven or hell. We are simply called upon to "believe" that these two ultra-extreme places of pleasure and pain do exist. Christians do not attempt to prove their assertions; and why? Simply because not one iota of evidence have they that there is either a heaven or a hell.

In the olden times the religionists pointed toward the sky and said, "there is heaven," and likewise toward the earth, and said, "beneath the earth is hell." According to their master minds, angels appeared in the *clouds* and *descended* to the earth. We are told that when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed the Supreme Power *rained* brimstone and fire *out of heaven* upon the doomed cities. Joseph in his dream saw a ladder *let down from heaven.* Prophet Elijah went *up to heaven* in a chariot and his mantle *fell* on Elisha. And when Christ was baptized, according to the Bible, the heavens were opened and the Spirit *descended* in bodily shape. In Luke 24:51 we are told that Christ blessed his apostles and was carried *up into heaven.*

Passages innumerable might be quoted from the Bible which would satisfy any thinking man that it was the intention of the authors of that work to impress upon the minds of their readers the fact that the sky above our heads contained a country or city which was reserved for the eternal residence of the believers in Christ, and that beneath the earth there existed a place of eternal punishment.

The authors of the "plan of salvation" apparently supposed that the placing of heaven and hell at such great distances would be sufficient to halt the investigations of critical minds; but not so. Our mighty telescopes invented since the Bible was written have enabled us to look out into space for millions of miles. Every visible star and planet has been carefully examined for any trace of the existence of a heaven or hell. And after years of observation and research astronomy announces to the world that *there are no such places as heaven and hell in the material universe.*

In the face of this all-important scientific discovery, religionists, realizing that it was useless to fight against solid, proved truth, began to invent theories in an endeavor to offset the effect. The more ignorant still

cling to the idea that somewhere the sky conceals a heaven and a hell. They argue, and with much logic, that the doctrine of reincarnation admits of nothing less than a material heaven. The proof, then, that there *do not* exist such places in the material universe makes reincarnation improbable, and strikes a death-blow at the root of Christianity.

Other religionists try to smooth over the matter by using a brand of evasion called diplomacy. Some explain the discrepancy between religion and fact by saying that these two disputed places do exist, but only in a spiritual sense. Others claim that heaven and hell exist in each individual conscience—that is, if we are good we experience the fruits of goodness (heaven), and if we are bad we suffer the consequences of badness (hell). Others claim that there is a material heaven, but no hell. Others say that heaven and hell have been ordered, but have not yet arrived. And still others claim that the central portion of the sun is heaven, and the outer portion is hell. An impassable gulf is supposed to separate them.

It seems to be a grand guessing match, in which the object is not so much to get at the truth, but rather to bolster up the plan of salvation as announced by Christ. It reminds one of the consternation caused by a thunderstorm coming suddenly upon a picnic party. Each person claims the shelter of the nearest tree.

All such "theories" and "doctrines" and "beliefs" in regard to the after-life are plainly the inventions of man. There can be no doubt of that fact. They are not based on proved facts, or results of careful investigations.

Heaven and hell have proved a will-o'-the-wisp, and searching parties sent out to capture the illusive fancy have tired of the unprofitable search and have reported back not where the places were, but where they *might be*, though at the same time confessing absolute absence of real proof and admitting that they might be somewhere else.

In discussing this subject recently a clergyman stated that *he felt in his heart that there was a heaven.* I would not seek to make light of any man's honest opinions; yet, while this clergyman may have been sincere, such evidence as he professed is decidedly unreliable.

If heaven is only a fancy, then Christianity is false, Christ a humbug, and salvation a dream. And yet when I cry for evidence on which to base an intelligent belief of the truth of the primal claim of Christianity, I am told that my friend is affected with some indescribable, inexplainable feeling in his heart which tells him that there does exist an eternal place of pleasure. Sherlock Holmes would find his wonderful system of deduction useless in this case. There is no hypothesis here on which to base a possible theory.

Christianity exclaims, "believe, believe; put away discussions and investigations." How beautiful and easy it is made! Just stop, shut your eyes and jump. You are supposed to land somewhere, but don't bother your mind about that. Then you are supposed to be gathered up, transformed, equipped with a harp and a crown and given a "place" in heaven. Why, it seems that nobody but a fool would hesitate, especially since if you do not jump the devil will get you and roast you in a white-hot oven. And do you know that a vast majority of people accept Christianity because they are scared into it? The devil and his hot oven make more converts to Christianity than all other schemes combined.

But the idea of a material heaven and hell is being rapidly discarded by Christianity. The most popular belief to-day in regard to these two places is that they do exist, but only in a spiritual sense, to be used as a repository for the freed souls of departed human beings. The explanation for the invention of this theory is that since the Bible teaches the existence of such places, and, since it has been proved that there is no material heaven or hell, in order to sustain the remaining doctrines of the

Bible some theory which cannot be disproved must be put forward. But we cannot get away from the fact that the Bible plainly teaches that heaven and hell are material.

St. Paul says (Heb. 11:16) that the Supreme Power has prepared a *city* for believers. In Revelation St. John tells of his alleged visit to heaven. He states that after being called by a loud *voice* he turned and saw seven *golden candlesticks*. Golden candlesticks are distinctly material and not spiritual. He also says that he saw Christ *clothed* with a long *garment* that reached down to his *feet*, his *hair* was as white as *snow*, and his feet seemed to be made of molded *brass*. This minute description of Christ is decidedly not that of a spiritual personage. It fairly teems with material terms.

St. John states (Rev. 4) that while he was writing down what Christ had told him that suddenly a *door* was opened and some one called to him through a megaphone to come inside. He states that he obeyed the voice, and that he saw the Supreme Power *sitting on a throne*, surrounded by twenty-four *seats*, on which were *sitting* twenty-four men *clothed in white* and each having a golden crown on his head.

Now a seat is an invention of man intended to act as a resting-place for tired and aching bones. I thought that spirits were a kind of boneless affair, without shape or composition, that could be here, there and everywhere at the same time. But John says that he saw them—twenty-four of them—with clothes on, sitting around the throne of the Supreme Power! Besides these John says that he saw four beasts. Think of that, you who say that animals have not souls! If John's description is of things spiritual, then you must admit that at least four beasts' spirits had found their way to heaven. These beasts were sitting near the throne and they had many eyes, both inside and outside. Then John saw that the Supreme Power held a *book* in his *hand*, which was so

tightly sealed that no one was able to open it. Then John cried because he was anxious to see what was written in the book. It seems that Christ had gone out while John was wondering what the book contained, for suddenly he came upon the scene in the shape of a slain (?) lamb. But, strange to say, the fact that the lamb was slain did not interfere with its performing the wonderful stunt of prying open that book. John began his story by declaring that he saw things in the spirit, then he descends to the material and finally runs amuck among the ridiculous.

This fanciful story of John's is given as a part of the "inspired" word of the Supreme Power, and must therefore be accepted by Christians as the whole truth. But, candidly, it seems to me that the Book of Revelation is rather a problem novel, with a certain purpose in its plot. Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" may be cited as a parallel. Instead of being a truthful narrative of actual occurrences, it is rather the masterpiece of the wonderful imaginative genius of a born novelist impelled by the philosophy and teachings of Christ.

There are also many references in the Bible which leave no doubt that it was Christ's intention to leave the impression that heaven and hell were material. In his parable of Lazarus and Dives, Christ says that after Dives died he *lifted up his eyes*, and saw Lazarus up in heaven; and that Dives cried with a loud *voice* to Abraham to let Lazarus dip the tip of his *finger* in *water* and cool his (Dives) *tongue*, because he was tormented in the flame. Not only does Christ here speak of a material heaven and hell, but he also indicates that the inhabitants thereof were of flesh and bone and nerves, and were subject to human pleasures and pain.

On several occasions angels are said to have appeared coming down from heaven and to have disappeared in the same direction. Christ is said to have gone up in the skies, when he left his disciples at Bethany.

In John's description of heaven he says: "The building of the wall of it was of jasper, and the city was pure gold, and the foundations of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones," including jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolyte, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus and amethyst, "the twelve gates were twelve pearls" and "the streets were of pure gold."

If heaven and hell are material, we have absolutely no evidence that such is the case. And when modern Christianity makes the assertion that the places are spiritual, the burden of proof still lies heavily upon the shoulders of Christ's followers, with absolutely no evidence to support their claims.

LIFE AND DEATH.

CHRISTIANITY teaches a philosophy based primarily upon the hypothesis that death is merely a dividing line in man's existence, determining the end of his earthly life and the beginning of another existence which is said to be eternal. The conditions of the after-life, the systems of government to be employed in the eternal "city," and even the details of the architectural construction of the city itself, are supposed to be revealed by the Supreme Power to man in the so-called "Word of God." St. Paul (I Cor. 15:51-52) says: "We shall not all sleep * * * in the twinkling of an eye * * * the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised."

But how are we to *know* that this theory of man's future existence is correct? By "know" I mean the possession of sufficient proof to convince the thinking man that Christianity has rightly defined "death." I am free to confess that I do not *know* what death is. There are thousands of other people who are willing to confess that they do not know the definition of death. And I feel safe in going further and stating that I do not believe that a single mortal in existence to-day *knows* the facts as they really are.

Before we can answer the question of what death is, first let us decide upon an answer for the question, What is life?

Ask the learned biologist, who has spent his life in constant research and scientific investigations in questions dealing almost exclusively with life, what that something which distinguishes the dead from the living is. Define it—give its chemical analysis. Can he do it? No. He tells us that so far science has been unable to tell what life is.

Ask the most eminent physicist, the most noted physiologist, even the clergyman, who claims to be "called of God" to teach the doctrines of death and eternity; ask the world, *What is life?* No answer. No one knows.

We see it every day, on every hand. Our friends and ourselves possess that peculiar quality called life. The birds of the air, the beasts of the fields, even the grape-vine that entwines itself around its supports, and the crab-apple geranium that fills the air with its pleasant perfume, all have *life*. You, my friend, and I also possess that unknown quantity called life. The people who are going to severely criticize me for writing this book possess that mysterious thing called life. I put the question fairly to every one, What is life?

If you cannot answer this question about something with which all are familiar, which all have seen, which all have experienced, which all at this moment *possess*, how can you expect to answer the question, What is death? Did you ever get a glimpse of things beyond the grave? Did any one who had experienced death return and tell you personally what death was? Brought down to the last analysis, we are compelled to admit that we do not know the definition of life or of death. We do not know when we are going to experience death, neither do we know whether or not death is the end of man's existence.

But since the thought that the grave should be the end of man is repulsive, we say: "I *think* that I am going to live forever;" "I *believe* that the Supreme Power will take me to heaven when I die;" "I *hope* that my name will be written in the Lamb's Book of Life." These are pleasant anticipations. We don't like to think of being laid away in a cold grave and there remaining dead—dead throughout eternity. But on what do you base your belief that death is a mere "valley" through which we pass from earth to another state of existence?

The minister will say that the Supreme Power told his people the facts concerning death and the after-life; that he sent his son, who reiterated what the Supreme Power had said and invited all to choose between heaven and hell. I ask for the source of their information and they point to the Bible, which they tell us was inspired, or, in other words, is in reality the "Word of God."

I ask the Mormons their authority for their belief in a "God" and a future existence beyond death. They refer me to the Bible and the Book of Mormon, the latter being a supplement to the Bible alleged to have been given in 1823 to Joseph Smith by the Supreme Power and having equal authority with the Bible.

I ask the Mohammedans for the source of their belief along similar lines, and they refer me to the Koran, which they allege is the "Word of God" as revealed by the Supreme Power to the prophet Mohammed.

I ask the Brahmans, and they point to the Vedas, which they say were written by Brahma, the first person of the trinity.

I ask the Confucians, the Shintoists, the Budsoists, the Dahomans, the Ashantees, the Malagasys, the Ramahavalys, the Tahitians—in fact, almost every sect—and all have evidence which they believe was handed down to them by their "God," sufficient to prove the existence of a Supreme Power and of his plan to convey the soul after death to another state of existence. Even the pagans of darkest Africa and in the most remote and uncivilized places of Asia believe in a Supreme Power and in an eternity.

So far, apparently, the religions of the world agree. These two fundamental ideas form a groundwork upon which practically *all religions* are built. But the evidence by which all sustain their belief is simply that, "God told us so." And this unproved statement is all the evidence offered to prove that their teachings and doctrines are correct.

THE PERSONALITY OF "GOD."

Now, it is impossible for me to conceive how any one can intelligently doubt the existence of a Supreme Power. No one can study the details of the three sciences—biology, psychology and astronomy—without admitting that there is some power that organized, systematized and is now in touch with the plan of the universe. To my mind the evidence is sufficient and indisputable. But to attempt to define this mysterious power, to describe its personal appearance, to enumerate its virtues or vices, or to claim relationship with it, is preposterous in the extreme. The one fact of the existence of this mysterious power is stamped plainly everywhere and on everything. But here our knowledge on the subject ends, and all theories, beliefs and doctrines which pretend to go further are mere conjectures and inventions of man.

The religious world was startled when on the 18th day of last December that noted clergyman, Dr. Lyman Abbott, gave expression to his heart's conception of the Supreme Power. "My God is a great and ever-present force, which is manifest in all the activities of man and all the workings of nature. I believe in a God who is in and through and of everything—not an absentee God, whom we have to reach through a Bible or a priest or some other outside aid." In commenting on Dr. Abbott's practical renunciation of Christianity, Bishop Cheney, of the Episcopal Church, flings back into the teeth of the outspoken clergyman the word "heretic." What power has elevated Bishop Cheney to the pedestal of infallibility, that he should thus stigmatize a fellow-mortal for speaking openly of what he thinks in his heart? Is the signet of divine approval in the custody of this self-appointed clerical critic? Are Bishop Cheney's "thinks" in regard to the personality of the Supreme Power of any more value than Dr. Abbott's

"thinks"? Bishop Cheney details his idea of the Supreme Power as follows: "My idea of a Personal God is a God that has emotions, a God that I can converse with as understandingly as with my own mother."

I refuse to accept Bishop Cheney's "authority" over religious truth for the same reason that I refuse to accept any one else's "authority" over such matters. If Bishop Cheney can produce sufficient evidence to prove that his "idea" is correct, then it will be accepted by every man and every woman in the world who has enough brains to keep out of the insane asylum. But until Bishop Cheney does produce this evidence he is in no position to criticize others for refusing to accept his "idea" of the Supreme Power.

Bishop Cheney's own ground is untenable. How does he know that this Supreme Power is subject to emotions? He does not know it; he only "believes" so. How does he know when he prays that he is conversing with a Personal God? He does not know it; he only "believes" so. How does he know that the actions of this Supreme Power are affected by his supplications? He does not know it; he only "believes" so. How does he know that his conception of this Supreme Power is correct? He does not know it; he only "believes" so. Many learned men have had "ideas," and "conceptions," and "beliefs," but no one from Adam down to Cheney has really *known* what this Supreme Power is. No one knows whether he is a personal God or whether he is an absentee God, whether he is a material God or whether he is a spiritual God. There is some power, beyond the knowledge of man to describe, which formed the universe, and which is now in touch with the processes of evolution and dissolution which constitute the progress of material matters, but no man possesses a knowledge of what that Supreme Power is.

THE BASIS OF RELIGION.

IT is, primarily, the intention of this book to show this one fundamental truth of the existence of a Supreme Power to be the only proved belief of any of the various religious bodies. All enlargements upon this fact I regard as mere inventions and conceptions of man, the most catching and plausible of which have been taken up and propagated by those persons over whom the authors of such conceptions had influence.

The existence of a Supreme Power is the common ground on which the religions of the world agree, and from this point they branch out in all directions, the customs, character and intelligence of the people determining in a large degree the nature of their supplementary beliefs.

There are, approximately, 1,000 different religions or sects in the world. All have their distinct beliefs and forms of worship. All claim that the Supreme Power has revealed to them certain facts in regard to this life and also in regard to a future life. All have recipes which they believe will insure an inheritance of eternal life in heaven. And most of them insist that unless their directions are closely followed we are certain not only to lose that valuable inheritance, but also to be cast into a hell, which a certain clergyman down in Texas has told us is 453 degrees in temperature.

All of these sects have "proof" sufficient to their own satisfaction to convince themselves that their creed and form of worship are correct, and that they have the approval of the Supreme Power. They also believe, and stand ready to "prove," that every other sect is wrong. Brahmans believe that only Brahmans will enjoy the eternal state of happiness. Mohammedans believe that

no Brahman or Christian, or, in fact, any one except a follower of Mohammed, will enjoy that eternal rest. Christians believe that "no man cometh unto the Father but by me," that no one but Christians will reach the "eternal City of God." And Roman Catholics, a branch of Christians, believe that no Christian can get to heaven unless he *belongs* to the Roman Catholic Church, and that all who die outside the Catholic Church are doomed to punishment in a hell of fire—superheated and eternal. Baptists refuse to eat the "Lord's Supper" with any one who has not been baptized by immersion, on the grounds that those who have not been so baptized have not obeyed the command of Christ and cannot therefore be regarded as in "fellowship."

I ask the Mormons about polygamy. They answer that God countenanced it, and they point to Joseph Smith's writings, which they claim were God-given. I ask Christians, and they deny that the Supreme Power is in favor of polygamy.

I ask the Mohammedans about their doctrines, which teach of sensual rewards after death. They reply that such is the case, that the Supreme Power told them so. Other sects differ from the Mohammedans, denying that the Supreme Power ever indorsed the idea.

And so it goes, each sect believing that they are on the straight and only road that leads to heaven, while all the other sects are on the road that leads to hell. Christians look with pitying eye toward the black Dahoan in Africa bowing down before and worshiping his god, Dahoa (a snake), and they feel so sorry that he has never heard of Christ, because he is doomed to an eternal existence in hell unless he accepts Christ as his saviour. While at the same time, perhaps, that same black Dahoan is sorry—oh, so sorry—because Christians choose to ignore the great and only key to eternal rest—his great Dahoa.

True, there is no comparison between the black pagan of Africa and the Christian of America, as far as intelligence and civilization are concerned. It is naturally to be expected that if either is correct as to his religious views, it is the one possessing the higher degree of civilization. And, of course, it seems almost inconceivable that any one could for a moment "believe," much less know, that by worshiping a captive snake it would insure eternal bliss. Yet it seems equally inconceivable to me that should that black Dahoan be an honest man and have lived a clean life, how his failure to accept the creed of some Christian sect is going to damn his soul to everlasting perdition.

In other words, it is my firm belief that if a man thinks and acts right he will live right, and that if a man lives right he will die right, and that he need have no fear whatever in regard to any future existence into which he may pass after death—if, indeed, the grave be not the end of man.

If all of these 1,000 different sects have "received assurances from God" that only their followers will be found in heaven, and should all of these different sects be correct in their beliefs, there will of necessity be 1,000 different heavens to suit the individual tastes of the various sects, though I suppose they would be willing to agree upon one hell for all, to be run on the club plan.

Each sect claims to base its belief upon certain laws and rules of faith which it *claims to have received from the Supreme Power direct.* The fallacy and impossibility of such wholesale and contradictory "Words of God" are apparent. Either the Supreme Power must be made out to have told lies to certain persons, or else several so-called "Words of God" are in reality preposterous falsehoods conceived by men destitute of a sense of honesty and truth. Either the Supreme Power is dishonest, or else certain creeds and beliefs are the inventions of unscrupulous men, who either for money or

notoriety have claimed to be the "mouthpieces" of the Supreme Power. The impossibility of the Supreme Power's dishonesty being apparent, the latter deductions become evident.

Naturally the question arises as to which of these sects has the true "inspired" or "revealed Word of God." Great caution and a thorough research being necessary to enable a trustworthy answer, I have spent many years taking evidence on various beliefs. This has been done in an absolutely honest, fair-minded manner, the only object in view being to find out for myself the truth—the whole truth. I am not setting myself up as being the personal messenger of the Supreme Power in regard to these matters. In issuing this book I simply claim the right as a member of the human race to give to my fellow-men that which in my inmost soul I believe to be the truth concerning religion and matters appertaining thereto.

My search for truth has been worse than the traditional search for a needle in a haystack. My conclusions are as follows:

1. Every one of the so-called "Words of God" was invented by man—man-conceived, man-written and man-announced.

2. The claims of inspiration from the Supreme Power are unproved in every case.

3. A future spiritual existence is a mere conjecture, the wish being father to the thought.

4. The divisions of eternity into heaven and hell were invented by man for the purpose of exacting obedience or tribute.

5. All religions are a mass of philosophy and superstition.

6. Man does not know why he came into this world, or how long he is going to stay here, or how, when or why he is going to leave this world, or where, if anywhere, he is going after death.

THE COMPONENTS OF RELIGION.

THE beliefs of all religious bodies may be divided into three component parts, as follows:

1. FACTS.
2. PHILOSOPHY.
3. SUPERSTITION.

Under the head of facts we find the belief that there exists a Supreme Power. This idea runs through all religions.

The subject of philosophy is discussed at length in the chapter entitled "The Mistake of Moses."

The superstitions of religion may be subdivided into three classes—viz.: (*a*) Impossible, (*b*) Human and (*c*) Idealistic. Paganism contains very little of philosophy, but is composed almost entirely of impossible superstitions. Human superstitions figure largely in the Brahman and Mohammedan religions, although the impossible and idealistic superstitions are present to some extent. The idealistic superstitions are dominant in the Christian religion, while the impossible and human superstitions are more or less evident.

IMPOSSIBLE SUPERSTITIONS.

(*a*). Impossible superstitions are those which are absolutely opposed to all laws of common sense and of nature—those which exist without the slightest evidence of credulity. Among these I note the belief among the pagans of Polynesia that in making supplications to the Supreme Power one should appear either in a cross-legged or crouching position. Plain common sense tells us that such a belief is absurd. It is natural to suppose that a Supreme Power would look at the attitude of the mind toward him, irrespective of the position in which the body may

be, it being non-essential whether the supplicant appear with bowed head or with head thrown back, whether with eyes closed or open, whether kneeling, lying down, cross-legged or standing on the head. The attitude of the mind toward the Supreme Power alone determines the value of the supplication, irrespective of whether the supplicant makes the sign of the cross on the forehead, or on the stomach, or not at all.

The argument may be advanced that it is desirable to have a uniform mode of worship, and, since the manner of presenting the supplication is non-essential, that therefore I am not justified in criticizing. I maintain that such customs are harmful superstitions, whether in vogue among the pagans of Polynesia or the Christians of America. They were invented by sagacious religious leaders and were intended to awe the ignorant and mislead the intelligent. Rituals detract from the object in view; they draw away the attention of the mind and make it impossible to concentrate the thought on the supplication being presented; they tend to make such supplications a network of methods and motions rather than spontaneous outpourings of heart thoughts toward the Supreme Power; they tend to substitute uniformity for earnestness.

The pagans of Madagascar have a ceremony called *maifura*, which is as follows: A priest of one of their medical idols, Ramahavaly, sprinkles honeyed water over the people as they pass before him, at the same time crying out, "Take courage, you, your wives and your children. You have Ramahavaly; he is the preserver of life, and should diseases invade he will suddenly arrest them and prevent them coming near to injure you."

The pagans of Benin, Africa, on great occasions will kill a cock and offer its blood as a sacrifice to their idols. Other pagans of Africa give annual feasts to their idols, when thousands of cattle are sacrificed.

The Mohammedans have a peculiar custom of praying with their faces turned toward Mecca, which custom can be characterized as nothing less than an impossible superstition.

The Roman Catholics have customs of blessing water, houses, trees, cattle, etc. They practice a peculiar, meaningless rite of burning incense. But perhaps the most noteworthy impossible superstition of Catholicism is the "doctrine" of transubstantiation. The priest takes the bread and wine, "blesses" it, according to a formula promulgated by the Holy See, and then solemnly declares that the bread and wine have been transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, not figuratively, but actually. Catholics hold that a miracle has been performed, that the bread on the tray before the priest is really the body—the flesh—of Christ, and that the wine is really the blood—human blood—of Christ.

HUMAN SUPERSTITIONS.

(*b*). The human superstitions are those relating to man and his passions. The most prominent human superstition among the Mormons is that unspeakable custom known as polygamy. They really teach that the Supreme Power was in favor of polygamy! Joseph Smith must have been intoxicated with uncontrollable sensuality when in 1843 he had the nerve to "report" that the Supreme Power had appeared to him and announced this method of connubial bliss.

In Confucianism the most prominent human superstition is the doctrine which teaches that after his death Confucius was transformed into a god.

Mohammedanism teaches that Mohammed was a "prophet" of the Supreme Power. While Mohammed's life history is interesting and unusual, yet claims of his relationship with the Supreme Power are improbable.

The Jews have a custom which is distinctly a human superstition. It is called circumcision. No orthodox Jew would think of omitting this ceremony, and yet its practice is an indirect accusation that the Supreme Power made an error in the construction of man.

Christians have a ceremony called christening. Before the newcomer has had time to begin to inspect this curious world into which it has been thrust, its loving papa and mama "feel it their duty" to take it to the clergyman, who dashes drops of water upon the head of the innocent babe, at the same time reciting a lovely little formula. It looks so nice, you know. Papa and mama feel proud of the little babe, especially if it doesn't cry. Did you ever look up the origin of infant baptism? You will not find it mentioned in the Bible. Nowhere, from Genesis to Revelation, is such an idea even hinted at. Its exact origin is in doubt, but after years of practice its observance was made obligatory upon the members of the early church, and it became an established "custom" which is in vogue even at the present day. There is about as much hard common sense in infant baptism as there is in the custom prevalent among the darkies of the South of carrying a potato in the pocket as a cure for rheumatism. While the observance of infant baptism is commonly supposed to bring about a certain mysterious influence for good on the life of the babe, it has perhaps as much effect in that direction as has the potato on rheumatism. And yet infant baptism is regarded by Christianity as a solemn and sacred ceremony. Christening is clearly a human superstition.

The burning of incense, the doctrine of holy water, the blessing of houses, cattle, etc., the presence of statuary in the church, the bending of the knee upon entering the church, are all customs stolen from paganism. During the battle for supremacy between paganism and Christianity in Rome during the early centuries the leaders of Christianity were enabled to overcome the op-

posing forces only by resorting to a system of absorption. Pagan ideas and customs, rituals and modes of worship were modified and adopted. Like Aaron's snake-rod it swallowed its enemies bodily. And the Roman Catholicism that we have to-day is by no means pure Christianity. It is a mixture of Christianity and paganism. The seed of the tree was the teachings of Christ, but paganism has been grafted into its branches, with the result that the fruit produced is neither like the original nor yet like the grafted, but rather a seedless affair that stands for bigoted religious intolerance.

These absorbed customs and rituals which are now held sacred by the Roman Catholic Church were born in ignorance and superstition and nourished by leaders accustomed to preying upon the credulity of man.

The most important human superstition held by Christianity is the claim that Christ was the Son of the Supreme Power. Christ was an extraordinary human philosopher, according to certain accounts. He was born of woman because there was no other way for him to come into the world. He ate to sustain life because had he refused food he would have starved to death, and finally he died because he was of the earth, earthy. The claim of Christ to divinity is discussed at length elsewhere in this book.

IDEALISTIC SUPERSTITIONS.

(*c*). Next we come to the subject of idealistic superstitions. Christianity abounds in superstitions of this nature. The personality of the Supreme Power, his court, his throne, his attendants, are all superstitions originally invented by man, perhaps for a good purpose, but later used by sagacious leaders to impose on their ignorant followers. The existence of spirits in the form of angels, the existence of heaven and hell, and their descriptions, the existence of the devil and the story of his

being expelled from heaven—all such ideas are mere human inventions.

These idealistic superstitions have been held sacredly by men for thousands of years, and solely for this reason: the idea of heaven as a reward for goodness and of hell as a punishment for badness appeals to the average man's sense of justice. For instance, we see an old woman on the verge of the grave; she has devoted her life to helping those in need, to those in distress she has extended valuable advice, to the sick she has given her time and sympathy, and to the penniless she has given in her poverty. It seems perfectly natural for us to say: "When she dies she will go to her reward." On the other hand, when we see a brutal father, who in a drunken frenzy has killed his little six-year-old daughter, pronounced guilty of murder, we make this comment: "Hell is too good for such a man." Human nature loves justice, especially for other people, if it is hard, and for ourselves, if it is pleasant. And the idea that the future existence is intended as a balance to even up the inconsistencies of this life seems to strike a popular chord.

But where is our proof that there will be a future place of rewards? The maker of the universe has deemed it wise to forbid man to look into the future, even as far as the fraction of a second. Not a person on earth to-day knows what is going to happen ten thousand years from now, nor one year hence, nor one day, nor even one minute from the present time. We may prophesy, but there is always the possibility that our guesses may be incorrect. "Something" is always happening that overthrows the most carefully laid plans. The future is one large impenetrable interrogation mark. We guess, and we believe, and we hope, but we cannot state positively that we *know* the events of the future. There may be a heaven or there may not be a heaven. I do not know, you do not know, no one knows. The pres-

ent is ours, the past is ours, but the future is as yet impenetrable.

Therefore, all "prophecies" in regard to a future existence are superstitions. I have called these idealistic superstitions because, while based on a mere wish, yet they appeal to the average man's idea of the ideal.

The Christian version of the after life might be called a "local" idea, for at least two-thirds of the population of the earth have never even heard of it. There is another belief, entirely dissimilar to the Christian version, that is held by many millions of people. I refer to the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul. This means that when a man dies his soul enters another being, which may be either animal or human. If a man should live a life of gluttony and brutality his soul when freed would likely enter a pig. Or, if a man lived a life of modest self-sacrifice, his soul might enter the babe destined to become a great statesman. If a man during his life had been a hard master, cruel to his employees, his soul would likely pass after death into the body of a babe destined to be a workingman, compelled to work under a cruel and arrogant employer. If a man during his lifetime had been cruel to horses, in the next stage of his soul's existence we would find the tables turned; he would be in the form of a horse owned by a cruel man. If a man during his life had been a wife-beater, his soul would later enter a babe destined to become an abused wife. This is indeed a marvelous system of justice.

The idea of transmigration of the soul is held by many millions of the earth's population to-day. We hear little about it over here in Christian America, but in other parts of the world the situation is reversed. The Christian idea is likely to become the most popular in the long run, because it is more idealistic. The average man would rather run the chance of squeezing into heaven for a long stay, than to be bothered by constantly wondering what animal his soul would inhabit next. The

Christian idea makes man think that he is an embryo angel, a relative of the Supreme Power, while the transmigration-of-the-soul idea teaches a certain relationship between man and the lower animals. But both theories are inventions of man; both are based not on fact but on imaginary hypotheses, the wish being father to the thought. Man desires to know the secrets of eternity, and sagacious religious leaders have attempted to supply the demand, not by producing the real article, but by substituting baseless yet popular theories. We often feel our anger rise when we are imposed upon by the shoddy clothing merchant, the adulterating groceryman or the substituting druggist, and should it not also make our temper rise when we cry for religious truth and receive something "just as good"?

The mere fact that a certain supposition is ideal does not necessarily indicate that it is also true. Our ideals are dependent upon conditions and environment, and are therefore changeable; but the truth cannot fluctuate even at the command of bishops or Popes or the Supreme Power itself.

MORMONISM.

THE Mormons, also known as the Latter-Day Saints, are a distinct branch of Christians, and the doctrines which they hold were invented by Joseph Smith less than a hundred years ago.

Smith was born in Vermont on December 23, 1805. His father, a farmer, finding his Vermont farm unprofitable, moved to Palmyra, N. Y., in 1815, and four years later to Manchester, N. Y. When Joseph had reached his fifteenth year he seemed to have received his first religious impressions. He examined into the claims of the various religious denominations, and, finding such a network of confusion and superstition, he retired to a secret place and asked the Supreme Power to tell him what to do.

If Joseph had told the truth as to what really took place at that interview, perhaps he would have spent the rest of his days tilling the soil and the curse of polygamy would have remained unresurrected.

Smith claimed that during September, 1823, an angel and *messenger of the Supreme Power* revealed to him a certain place where there were deposited certain golden tablets, upon which were written many heretofore unknown historical facts, together with messages from the Supreme Power to the Latter-Day Saints.

The Book of Mormon is a wonderful work, but like all other so-called "Words of God" its origin is in doubt.

Joseph Smith was an ordinary mortal, having come into this world according to the laws of nature, having existed physically in a manner exactly similar to that of other specimens of the higher order of animals, and having left the world through the agency of death. While in life he possessed an ordinary brain, with the

usual convolutions, and containing the usual number of "centers." He possessed the usual five senses of seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting. The obtaining of daily bread was as serious and necessary a pursuit with him as with any one else. He had his bargains with the furniture dealer, his arguments with the coal man, and his disputes with the landlord. He built the fires in the morning, walked the floor at midnight with the baby, and mashed his fingers while putting down the parlor carpet. Joseph Smith was one of us—like you and me—flesh, bones and brain—a man. He was not free from influences of love or of anger. He possessed sufficient intelligence to discern right from wrong, and he possessed also the power to choose between them. He knew the difference between truth and untruth, between honesty and dishonesty. Influences of environment and expediency were as strong, perhaps, in his life as in that of the ordinary man. He possessed certain virtues and also certain vices. He could be good or he could be otherwise. He could be honest as well as dishonest, he could lie as well as tell the truth. The power to do either was his.

HONESTY.

And did you ever notice that telling the truth is sometimes harder than lying? The main reason why many people tell the truth is that when called upon to substantiate their statements it is so easy to do so. Generally speaking, honesty is practiced not because it is right, but because it is the best policy.

I do not mean that all men are, strictly speaking, liars, though I do claim that the ordinary man will avoid telling the truth when it is expedient to do so. Every one who has passed through this world has been more or less guilty of lying (babies and freaks excepted). The courts of the land presume that all men are liars and therefore they require an oath, sacred and retroactive,

from every witness in cases brought before them. And should the witness be too young or otherwise incapable of comprehending the meaning of committing the crime of perjury he is not allowed to give his testimony before the court.

Did you ever get caught in a lie? Mean feeling, is it not? You resolved to tell the truth next time, did you not? A specialist on fools once said to me: "Any fool can tell a lie, but it takes a wise fool to construct a lie so that it won't slap back."

Bank cashiers handle many thousands of dollars. It is possible for them to misappropriate large sums if they are so inclined. They know that to possess money is to be powerful, that money will aid in obtaining almost anything on earth except life and a clear conscience. Did you ever stop to think why they do not take a fortune for themselves from the vaults and settle down to a life of ease and pleasure? The main deterring influence is the *consequences* for themselves and for others. Disgrace and imprisonment for themselves, disgrace and suffering for their families and mortification for their friends. Honesty is a commendable virtue, but a *cash bond* will go further toward securing recognition in the business, social or religious world than the possession of an abnormal phrenological honesty bump. The desire for wealth and influence is part of our natures.

Some months ago a man of wealthy parentage, and who had been a student at Yale, entered a jewelry store in New York City. He asked to be shown certain expensive diamond rings. The salesman placed before him a tray containing about $5,000 worth of the sparkling jewels. In a moment he had snatched the tray. Unhindered he rushed through the street door. Down the avenue he ran, spurred on by the shrill "stop thief" of scores who had taken up the pursuit. Swifter feet than his soon threatened to overtake him. Preliminary to a last desperate effort to escape, he turned, faced his

pursuers and emptied the tray of diamonds in their path. The effect was magical. That brave, conscientious, law-abiding band of mortals, who had a moment before been so earnest in their efforts to see the dishonest citizen punished, stopped short and blackened one another's eyes in a wild scramble for possession of the gems which the dishonest citizen had attempted to steal.

The dishonest citizen in this case, knowing full well the consequences of his unlawful act, had decided to "run his chances" of being caught, and the action of his pursuers brought out plainly the fact that dishonesty is a human trait.

Our courts are busy dealing out a part of the "consequences" to dishonest citizens as a deterring warning to others who might otherwise be tempted to commit crime.

A few years ago several rich and influential fellow-mortals, known variously as "leading citizens" and "pillars" of their city, who were interested financially in the acts of the Common Council of St. Louis, were convicted and imprisoned for various crimes which would all come under the head of dishonesty. They fully realized that they were dealing dishonestly with the city, and they also knew the "consequences" that would fall upon them if justice should be meted out, but it looked so "easy" that they decided to "run the chances."

Dishonesty is a part of the human make-up. Denying this fact does not minimize it. We might as well admit the fact and stop whipping the devil around the stump. Far better to face the matter, cut down the stump and do what we can to overcome the evil. To imagine that any man is a twenty-two-karat, triple-X bunch of inherent honesty does not make him so. If a man has both legs amputated, he cannot dance a horn-pipe, and for him to imagine that he can does not change the fact. To deny that man is dishonest does not make him honest, but rather reflects the real character of man.

As I have stated before, it is the "consequences" of dishonest acts which deter those who would otherwise be tempted. We have also seen that many are willing to run the chance of being detected to profit by dishonest acts. But suppose we eliminate the "consequences"—remove all chance of detection, disgrace and punishment—dismiss the police—abolish the courts—remove all locks and place your life and property at the disposal of whoever had the desire to take it. The fall of Jericho, the destruction of Carthage, the sacking of Rome, furnish but a small idea of the pandemonium and terror that would reign in our city and country should the human trait of dishonesty be freed from the shackles of "consequences."

If some man of means takes exception to my views on this question, I would suggest an experiment that would undoubtedly determine how far I am right. Assemble ten thousand people, holding responsible positions, in Madison Square, New York City. At one side erect an absolutely secret booth in which place one million dollars in ten-dollar bills. Form the assemblage into single file and allow them to pass one at a time into the secret booth. Post a notice similar to the following on the wall inside the booth:

> "This money is not yours. It is dishonest to take any of it. The owner has many millions more beside this and would not suffer if you should take any of it. No one shall ever know should you take any of it, and no prosecution or disgrace will follow if you should do so."

How much of that million dollars would remain after the experiment had been tried, or, rather, how many people would remain in line after the million dollars had disappeared? The "consequences" for crime act on a man as does the brake on a wagon: it checks but does not destroy the natural inclination.

If I should come to you and say that the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company had sent me to solicit subscriptions with which to purchase more cars and to equip properly that creeping disgrace with up-to-date appliances, and should you hand me your check for a hundred dollars, I would more than likely be compelled to spend a term in the dishonest man's retreat up the Hudson. And why? Because I had secured money upon false pretenses. The officials of that grasping corporation would testify that I had lied—had committed a crime—and the Court would proceed to attach his signature to my "consequences."

A POINTED SUPPOSITION.

But suppose I should come to you and state that:

"Last night while I slept, behold a sudden empty feeling came around about me and tickled my feet. A small, still, invisible voice shouted unto me, 'hocus pocus aber nit,' which, being interpreted, is to say, 'harken.' In obedience to the command I arose, bowed three times toward the kitchen and crossed myself. And then Gabriel (it makes no difference how I found out that it was he) said: 'The Lord commandeth thee to go to Paterson and call upon the people to repent, to put on green cheesecloth and black mosquito netting, for I, the Lord thy God, am about to break another dam up the Passaic.'" Suppose that I should obey the command, that my story should take, and the people should arise, ship their goods to places of safety and take out additional insurance policies on their lives. Suppose that I should incidentally gather in my garner some fifty thousand dollars, that a big rain should fall, the Passaic be taxed to its utmost, and a large dam should break, sending down enough water to remove Paterson to the bottom of Newark Bay. What would be the result? Would any one think of sending me to Sing Sing? *Oh, no.* Why, the idea would be pronounced sacrilege.

Instead of Sing Sing, I would be pronounced a true prophet and messenger of the Supreme Power, and perhaps after death I might be elected to a Sainthood.

A man who has the nerve to father such a brazen falsehood as that certainly is entitled to the money so willingly given up by his dupes, and deserves distinction of some kind. And doubtless he would feel at home with "St." Catherine de Medici and other saints of lesser importance who have played important parts in the criminal history of the world.

In the first case stated my claim that authority had been given me by the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company to act as their agent was false and was so proved. In the latter case my claim that the Supreme Power had appointed me as his minister would be false, *but could not be so proved.*

If a man says that he has talked with the Supreme Power, his statement must either be accepted or rejected without corroborative proof of any kind. Notice particularly that all so-called interviews with the Supreme Power which have taken place within the limits of corroborative history have been of a private nature. Being "alone with God" is often claimed by various persons. Yet whether the Supreme Power was really present or took part in the interview is, to say the least, unproved.

If the Supreme Power should choose a certain man as a messenger through whom to deliver a message to the people, it would necessarily indicate that such a man was a godly man, practically perfect in living and adjudged by the Supreme Power as competent to carry out his wishes. For a man tainted in character and impure in living would hardly be chosen for such an important office as bearing messages from the Supreme Power. Hence to "talk with God" at once stamps a man as having the approval of the Supreme Power. If the Supreme Power delivers a message to a man for public circulation, calling for certain thoughts and acts from the

people, it can plainly be seen that such messages are highly important and of incalculable value. Such messages should be law to man, who is indeed the "handiwork" of the Supreme Power. The Supreme Power will never give to the people frivolous messages or teach any non-essential doctrines. Therefore it follows that having received a message from the Supreme Power indicates that such a man not only has the approval of the Supreme Power, but that what he says, having been delivered to him by the Supreme Power, *must be respected.*

It will thus readily appear that to claim to have talked with the Supreme Power would prove a big temptation to some people, provided an incentive of notoriety or wealth were involved. While such interviews can not be proved, yet on the other hand they can seldom be disproved. We must either be doubters or believers.

THE ORIGIN OF THE BOOK OF MORMON.

Joseph Smith claimed to have had an interview with the Supreme Power in which the Book of Mormon was given to him. It has since been proved that the Book of Mormon is a religious romance, or novel, as you please, written by Solomon Spaulding, a graduate of Dartmouth College, who was at one time a clergyman. While Joseph Smith was wearing his first pants Spaulding was out in Ohio writing his book. In 1812 he brought the manuscript to Pittsburg, Pa., and tried to induce a publisher by the name of Patterson to publish the work. Spaulding died before arrangements had been completed for the publication of the book. For fourteen years the manuscript remained pigeon-holed in Patterson's desk. Then Patterson died. In 1826 it passed into the hands of Sidney Rigdon, and he gave the unprinted volume to Joseph Smith. The fact that the book which Spaulding wrote and the Book of Mormon were one and the same is supported by the sworn state-

ments of several persons who had read Spaulding's manuscript and also an authentic edition of the Book of Mormon.

Joseph Smith, therefore, lied when he said that the Supreme Power had appeared to him and told him where there were buried certain golden plates on which were recorded a message from the Supreme Power to the public. It is also natural to doubt that Joseph Smith ever had an interview with the Supreme Power. No other course is left open to the thinking man but to pronounce Smith a religious fakir. The wrong which this man has done is incalculable. His crime is deeper than murder. Hundreds of thousands have depended on the teachings of this religious blackguard for eternal salvation. And if the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church that all who die outside that denomination are condemned to everlasting perdition is true, then Joseph Smith may meet over a million of souls in hell who will point to him as the cause of their damnation.

It being often impossible to prove the truth or untruth of alleged interviews with the Supreme Power, it follows that should the Supreme Power desire to deliver a message to the people he would first convince the people that the source of the message was the Supreme Power. Thousands have claimed themselves to be "messengers of God," and yet there is absolutely no proof that *any* of them were the messengers of the Supreme Power. They said that "God appeared to me and told me to tell you," etc. Now I realize that the absence of proof that the Supreme Power really did appear as claimed does not necessarily prove the claim to be false, yet the opportunity for deceit along this line is so great that I believe THAT IF THE SUPREME POWER HAS ANYTHING TO SAY TO THE PEOPLE HE WILL TELL THE PEOPLE DIRECT.

All persons, I believe, are (with due allowance for environments and hereditary taints) placed on an equal

footing before the Supreme Power. And it seems highly improbable to me that he would take Tom, Dick or Harry off into some corner and whisper to him some message which he wants me to hear.

It is just as easy for *him* to tell me as it is for him to tell you to tell me, and besides it would eliminate all opportunity of doubt in regard to the matter.

I am just as anxious to do the bidding of the Supreme Power as any one, and my refusal to accept ANY of the religions of the world is based on my belief in his omnipotence and impartiality.

CHRISTIANITY.

NEARLY two thousand years have passed since Christ's birth. History tells of the small beginning, the struggles for existence, the growth and final triumph of the religion launched by this wonderful philosopher. The Bible has been translated into hundreds of languages and dialects. Tens of thousands of missionaries have been sent to teach Christ and his religion to civilized, semi-civilized and even barbaric races of men. The army of Christ has advanced seeking to conquer the world, to culminate the unique spectacle of the entire world bowing before the memory of one great religious leader. Millions upon millions of dollars are being spent to establish the doctrine of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

Why all this hubbub? First, because man the world over seems to have the idea that some form of religious worship is necessary; second, because the philosophy of Christ appeals to the civilized peoples of the world as the ideal, and, third, because of the natural progressiveness of civilized nations supplemented by the command of Christ to make his teachings universal.

What is Christianity? The Christian claims that once upon a time the maker of the universe, seeing the sinfulness of the people, sent his only Son from heaven to earth; that while here Christ launched the true doctrine of the Supreme Power, and that he afterward died for the transgressions of the world.

I realize that to question the truth of these statements will be called sacrilege, and that to dispute a statement alleged to have been made by Christ will be regarded as blasphemy. But I also realize that questions of life, death and eternity are of such great importance to us

all that the effort to clear up such points concerning which we are in doubt can not but add to our actual knowledge on the subject.

Ordinarily we approach Christianity with a certain amount of uneasiness, with bowed heads, trembling limbs and apologetic minds. Then, awed by the appalling mystery of it all, we retreat. Some time ago there flourished a mysterious religion on one of the islands of our Philippine possessions. The leader was called the "New Pope," and claimed to be the representative of the Supreme Power. He had a "Sacred Altar" about four by six feet, in which he claimed was concealed a large sum of money in gold, together with the "laws of God" as given to the "New Pope." To such of his followers as believed, the money was to be distributed by the Supreme Power after the believer's death, so that he might enjoy himself in heaven. In their worship they would approach the box on bended knees and then gaze reverently on the "Sacred Altar." The father would take his son on his knee and tell him how the Supreme Power in his goodness had provided for their future—a future of eternal happiness. The boy grew up to be a man, and he, too, believed in the teachings of the "New Pope." He was happy, content to live, and when death came he died with a smile on his face and with visions of prosperity and plenty in the world to come. The entire tribe believed implicitly in the teachings of their leader. To dispute with him or to question his motives was blasphemy and was regarded as a crime punishable with death.

When the American soldiers occupied the island they proceeded to investigate the contents of that "sacred box." And what do you suppose they found? Nothing but an old, out-of-date Spanish almanac. Had it not been for the interference of the unwelcome visitors it is more than probable that the religion of the "New Pope" would have been handed down from father to son for

generations to come. But the interference of the soldiers, while uninvited, revealed to the people that their leader had humbugged them, and that their religion was based not on truth, but on untruth.

When I am called upon to accept Christianity I simply demand proof that Christianity is the authorized teaching of the Supreme Power. And cries of blasphemy and sacrilege will act as poor argument toward convincing thinking men. Instead of an appeal to sentiment I demand an appeal to reason and common sense.

You Popes, you bishops, you clergymen, you Sunday-school teachers, you enrolled members of Christianity, throw down the garb of mysticism, remove the veil of ritualism, put away tradition, intolerance and superstition, stand out boldly before the human race, whom you seek to save, and prove that your religion is God-given. I do not ask for proof that Christianity is ideal. If its source is the Supreme Power, it is "God's truth," and it is truth we seek and not idealistics.

I have tried to approach Christianity with the one object of *finding the truth* always in view. I have examined your Bible, I have carefully studied it from cover to cover, and I have found it to contain three elements, interwoven but distinct: 1. Hebrew almanac. 2. Philosophy. 3. Superstition.

The statement that the Bible contains a Hebrew almanac and a more or less authentic history of the Jewish race is proved by a glance at the book. The philosophy referred to is that given by Moses, Solomon, Christ and other Hebrew leaders.

That part of the Bible which details the personality of the Supreme Power, the direct dealing of the Supreme Power with the people, the divinity of Christ and the division of eternity into heaven and hell, I regard as hypothetical theories invented to sustain the Biblical philosophy and to invite sympathy and obedience to the

doctrines promulgated by the early Christian leaders. Such theories are plainly unsustainable and are therefore superstitious in texture.

THE CHRIST.

Let us glance carefully at the man who has been called the "Christ," "the Son of the Living God." We find that he came into this world apparently according to the laws of nature. He had a father and he had a mother. He was wrapped in the customary swaddling clothes, he grew to boyhood and to manhood. He was composed of flesh, bones and brain, like you and me. It was necessary for him to eat in order to live. He taught a new philosophy—the equality of man. His success among the working classes brought forth the jealousy and wrath of the accredited religious leaders. He was hunted, captured and put to death. Briefly, we find that he was born of woman, that life was sustained in the natural way, and that death ended his career.

The statement given in the Bible that Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost in Mary brings up a rather delicate question, an extended discussion of which would in no wise aid in determining the exact parentage of Christ. The Bible merely makes the statement without offering proof of its accuracy. And yet upon this statement that Christ was "born of God" hinges the entire truth of the whole Bible. If this statement of Christ's nativity is false, then Christianity is a sham. If Joseph or any other man was responsible for Mary's condition, then Christ was not the "Son of God."

But you will say that I can not prove that Christ was *not* conceived by the Holy Ghost in Mary. Very true. And now, on the other hand, it is impossible to prove that Christ *was* conceived by the Holy Ghost. It is plainly an open question, proof of either contention being unobtainable.

If I should make the statement that my former friend, John Jones, now dead, was conceived forty years ago by the Holy Ghost in a virgin three months before her marriage, you would refuse to entertain the statement unless accompanied by convincing evidence. But suppose it should be represented to you that unless you should accept my unproved statement about John Jones's nativity, you would be cast into a hideous, seething hell of damnation and fire after death. If I could convince you of the latter statement, you would readily accept the former even without a scintilla of evidence.

Thanks to religious freedom, people are taking a wholesome interest in the question of Christ's nativity. Even the clergy are inclined at times to jump the traces of "orthodox" slavery and assert what they—individually—believe. In his Christmas sermon last year the Rev. Minot J. Savage, one of the foremost ministers in the metropolis, gave utterance to the following statement:

"It was many years after the birth of Jesus before anybody thought of his being other than an ordinary man, born in the ordinary way—the whole idea of the Virgin birth and the incarnation is Pagan in its origin, and it was centuries before the church united upon any special day even for celebration of the coming of Jesus into the world."

While a statement of this character, coming from such a thorough theological student as Dr. Savage, seriously contradicts the Bible, yet, of course, it does not add to our actual knowledge on the subject. Dr. Savage's statement is of peculiar interest, because it shows that he has been looking into the matter deeply. He is not content to preach a thing because he was *taught* that it was correct, but he preaches it because he has *reason* to believe that it *is* correct.

The keynote of Christianity is faith. Paul says that by faith is man to be saved. Faith is belief without

evidence. Belief is the outcome of what we think, and what we think depends upon environments. The Zulu is born and raised in Zululand; his environments are saturated with Zulu teaching, the result being that he believes in the Zulu religion. The Chinaman is born and raised in China; his environments are overwhelmingly Confucian; the result is that he believes in the doctrines of Confucius. The Turk is born and raised in Turkey; his surroundings are distinctly Mohammedan; he believes in Mohammedanism. The American is born and raised in America, where everything is tinged with Christianity; the result is that he becomes a Christian.

Perhaps you consider yourself an earnest Christian, and perhaps you stand aghast at my seeming blasphemous utterances; but, my dear friend, do you know that should you have been born to a couple of Hottentots down in Zululand, instead of attending morning mass in New York you would have been dancing a skirtless dance in reverence to the god Gounja Gounja? Perhaps not, but the odds are 25,000 to 1 that you would.

Environments, then, determine our beliefs, and our beliefs form our religion. Here the great difference between religion and truth becomes apparent. Facts are the same the world over. The same facts are recognized in Zululand, in China, in Turkey, in America and in all other parts of the world. Environments do not affect facts. The normal man has ten fingers. The Zulu knows it, the Chinaman knows it, the Turk knows it and the American knows it. And why? Because it is a *proved* fact. We know that the rain falls from above. The people of the whole world, irrespective of religion or environment, agree that the statement is true. But when you state that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost in Mary three months before her marriage to Joseph, you are not offering a proved fact. You were taught to believe the statement by your parents, whose opinion you accepted with inno-

cent faith; the statement was later impressed upon your mind by the Sunday-school teacher, and finally you read the statement for yourself in that mysterious book called the "Holy Bible." And you believed it. Why? Because you were "raised up that way."

The argument has often been advanced that Christ's birth was accompanied by miraculous events—the wonderful meeting of the three wise men from the East and their subsequent action in following the "star." We are also reminded that the blind were made to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk and the dead to rise by the simple command of Christ. And when Christ died darkness is said to have covered the earth, and that earthquakes accompanied his dying agony.

The life stories of all the ancient religious leaders are filled with alleged miraculous happenings. Buddha, who was born in India about five hundred years before Christ's time, and whose followers to-day number more than twice as many as Christ's, had a very propitious birth, according to the sacred books of the Buddhists. At his birth ten thousand worlds are said to have been filled with light, the blind were made to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk, the prison doors were broken and the prisoners set free, the trees burst forth in blossom, the birds began to sing, and even the fires of hell were for the time extinguished. When he was five days old 108 Brahman priests came to see him, one of whom stated that he had received from heaven the information that the babe would grow to manhood and teach a doctrine that would redeem the world. When but a child, so the sacred books of Buddhism state, he was noted for his prowess, and he even taught his masters in the arts and sciences. Upon reaching manhood Buddha determined to start on his mission of saving the world. And as he was leaving his native city the devil met him and showed the pleasures of a life of ease and comfort in the city if he would but stay and put aside his wild ambition. But

Buddha replied: "A thousand or ten thousand such honors as those which you mention have no charms for me; I seek the office of 'Redeemer of the World'; therefore, get thee hence." And it is said that the devil left him in great anger, determined to foil him. Later on he withdrew himself to the jungles and spent a long time in meditation and prayer. He led a charmed life in which the supernatural seems to have played an important part. Since Buddha lived about five hundred years before Christ it is not possible to entertain the thought that the story of Buddha's life was stolen from the Bible.

Probably one-third of the population of the world believe that Confucius was the greatest man that ever lived. He was born in 550 B. C. in a cave in Mount Ne, China. Yen Ching Tsai, a noted wise man of that time, claimed to have been told by the Supreme Power that the birth of this great redeemer was at hand. Many strange signs and appearances also heralded his birth, and many angels are said to have been present when he was delivered from his mother. When fifteen years of age he began preparing himself for his life-work, and at twenty-two he had made himself famous.

In 570 A. D. a great number of miraculous signs, appearances, and voices from "heaven" disturbed the usual quiet of Mecca, Arabia. When it was all over, it was found that a babe had been born, who afterward proved to be the "prophet of God." At twelve, we are told, Mohammed realized that his mission was to save the world. When he was forty years of age the angel Gabriel is said to have appeared to him while he was spending a month in a cave, fasting and praying. Gabriel had a silken scroll in his hand and he bade Mohammed read the writing thereon. Gabriel gave Mohammed the title of "Prophet of God." Then Mohammed went forth teaching a new doctrine. The accredited religious leaders sought his life, but the Supreme Power is said to have intervened and saved Mohammed from his enemies.

Later he led his followers forth to a battle in which three thousand angel warriors were sent down by the Supreme Power to aid Mohammed. Of course, the opposition were hopelessly routed. When Mohammed had been preaching for about twelve years, the Supreme Power took him up into heaven and expounded to him the beauteous wonders of Paradise. At another time his enemies surrounded the house in which Mohammed was staying in Mecca, but the Supreme Power miraculously carried Mohammed to Medina and thus saved his life. Later, Mohammed having been surrounded by his enemies, in a cave near Mecca, the Supreme Power is said to have struck his pursuers with blindness. The statements made above are recorded in the Koran, the sacred book of the Mohammedans, and are believed by 200,000,000 people to be true.

Zoroaster, the prophet of the Parsees, lived about 1200 B. C. The religion which he taught was based on the idea of one God. His philosophy exhorted men to incorporate these three ideas in their lives: pure thoughts, pure words, pure deeds. Zoroaster claimed to have had several conversations with the Supreme Power, in which questions were asked and answered and religious matters discussed. These conversations form the foundation of the Zend-Avesta, the Bible of the Parsees. Zoroaster's birth and death were accompanied by manifestations of divine approval, according to his followers.

Similar claims, by the followers of other religious leaders in regard to the lives of their founders, might be given. It is a fact that every religious leader of the olden times has claimed a certain familiarity to have existed between himself and the Supreme Power. The followers of each claim their leader to have been born under propitious circumstances, that he was sent to earth to act merely as the mouthpiece of the Supreme Power, and that after death he was taken by the Su-

preme Power and given an important seat near his throne in heaven.

The claim of Jesus Christ to divinity must be viewed by the thoughtful student in exactly the same light as the claims of Buddha, Mohammed and others. The Bible of the Jews, the Tripitaka of the Buddhists, and the Koran of the Mohammedans are similar in their teachings—exhorting man toward purity of life. All of them relate alleged miraculous events in the lives of their respective leaders. It is quite likely that all such alleged miracles are exaggerations of simple events that grew as they were passed from tongue to tongue, until finally when, many years afterward, they were put into writing they bore but scant resemblance to the events as they really occurred. A partisan claim to supernatural power does not prove a religious leader's divinity.

It seems inconceivable to me that if the Supreme Power had for thousands of years been promising the world to send a redeemer, he would allow two thousand years to pass by after the redeemer had been sent without informing the world that his promise had been fulfilled. Christ has been dead nearly two thousand years, and yet *two-thirds* of the earth's population have not even heard of the event. Mohammed did not begin his religion until 610 A. D., yet the followers of Mohammed are as numerous to-day as those of Jesus Christ. In Mecca there is a Mohammedan Theological University in which there are 10,000 students being prepared to carry the faith of Mohammed to the utmost ends of the earth. From a standpoint of wealth the Christian nations are undoubtedly better prepared than the Mohammedan or Buddhist nations to contribute toward the spread of their beliefs. Millions of dollars are being poured by Christianity into the strongholds of Mohammedanism and Buddhism in Asia Minor, China and India in an effort to convert those people to the Christian faith. And progress is being made, but slowly.

All results thus far attained can safely be attributed to the display of money, the hospitals and the schools. When Christian missionaries were first sent to these people they relied upon the "power of God" through faith in Jesus Christ to induce the people to accept Christianity. And one missionary spent *forty years* in India preaching and teaching before he was able to induce any one to accept his faith. But *modern methods* have worked wonders where the *old-time religion* was of no avail. In which case let us be consistent and place the credit where it belongs—to modern methods.

The poor, ignorant native wants to learn; that is why he attends your *mission schools*. Or he is sick and calls at your *hospital* for treatment. By these means the missionary gains the native's confidence and finally his friendship. The poor fellow feels grateful for the kindness shown him, and asks the missionary what he would desire in return. The missionary, of course, sees the opening and forthwith begins to tell the ignorant fellow what he thinks he knows about heaven and hell. The result is that the frightened native exclaims: "Me no wanna go to hellee!" He argues that he has had enough bumps in this world and consequently he decides on no hell for him in the hereafter. Another Christian is made—thanks to *modern methods*.

The Bible states that the Supreme Power is no respecter of persons, and yet it is claimed that he has confided to a select few the fact that his son had been sent to redeem the *world*. Doesn't it look rather partial? And what will the Chinaman think of the Supreme Power when he hears that Christ was sent to redeem the world (including China) two thousand years ago, and that the Supreme Power has kept the fact from him all these centuries? Seems as if the Supreme Power wasn't much interested in the poor Chinaman. The Chinaman will think that maybe the laws of heaven include a Chinese exclusion act!

DID CHRIST COMMIT SUICIDE?

There is another theory in regard to the death of Christ which appeals very strongly to the unprejudiced Biblical student. Was not Christ, by permitting the mob to lynch him, indirectly guilty of suicide? The Bible teaches that he was omnipotent, that he had it within his power to prevent his slayers from causing his death, but instead of exerting this power he willingly permitted his enemies to execute their purpose.

Suppose a man should find himself lying across a railroad track at a time when a fast train was approaching. Suppose, also, that this man had the power to rise from the track and prevent the giant locomotive from crushing him, and that instead of getting out of the way he should continue to lie on the track, that he should utter a prayer, close his eyes and wait for the mangling process to begin. Whatever may have been the man's motive in permitting the tragedy to take place, it would be plainly a case of suicide, if viewed from an unprejudiced standpoint.

The true deductions in regard to Christ's death permit of but two conclusions: Either Christ indirectly committed suicide, or else he did not possess the power to save himself, and was, therefore, not the "Son of God." It is claimed that Christ died to save the souls of men, but nowhere, in theological, natural or social economy, is it explained how or by what process it is possible that a physical death could prevent or even affect another person's spiritual death. And since the new psychology teaches us that there is no proof that man has a soul, which would preclude the possibility of either a spiritual existence or a spiritual death, those individuals who are inclined to look upon Christ as no more than a religious leader should not—in all fairness—be regarded by their Christian brethren as mule-headed ignoramuses.

THE PLAN OF SALVATION.

The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Saved from what? Why, hell, of course. If you should be washed from the deck of a vessel at sea, and should a lifeline be thrown to you, what would you do? Ask the man at the other end of the line whether the line could be relied upon or not? Would you wait until a dozen or more lines had been thrown out so that you might select the one having the most pleasing shade of color? No; you would grasp the first line thrown and cling to it, because you wanted to be saved. Here we can see the reactive construction of the "plan of salvation," the basis being the desire of heaven and the dread of hell. Nature knows of no such places as heaven and hell. But religious leaders, taking advantage of human aversion to an empty eternity, have set up two imaginary extremes and called them heaven and hell, heaven being the extreme of pleasure, and hell the extreme of suffering. We are told that we will be permitted to pass to either place after death. Only one condition is required of those who would choose an existence in heaven, and that is that they profess Jesus Christ to be the Son of the Supreme Power.

I call special attention to the simple requirement, the enormous reward and the awful alternative. An endless round of pleasure in heaven for believing that Christ was the Son of the Supreme Power, and an endless existence of indescribable suffering in hell for refusing to believe that Christ was the Son of the Supreme Power. Could a greater incentive for becoming a Christian be invented? We have here the secret of the success of the Christian religion. It is a sort of get-rich-perhaps scheme—something for nothing. We are told to invest one little "belief" ("Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved") and the dividend, *payable after death*, will be an eternal existence in heaven. Do you

wonder that thousands rush to take advantage of this wonderful offer, which we are told may be withdrawn at any moment? Christianity has been corralling investors for two thousand years. The list contains about 200,000,000 names of investors now living.

Why do the promoters of Christianity advertise to pay the dividend after death? Because it is the safest plan. If you die and don't get it, you can't come back and "squeal." Also please notice that all "indorsements" and "letters of recommendation" which are shown the prospective investor were all written *before death*—prior to the date for payment of the dividend.

The investment is so small and the promised dividend is so large that, to quote the hawker at Coney Island, "everybody buys." Of course, there are some weekly and monthly "assessments," such as clergyman's salary, running expenses, etc., which in the aggregate amount to about $380,000,000 per year (1900), but this is merely incidental. The progress of Christianity may be attributed to a thorough system of organization, a cunning method of exacting tribute (the Lord loves a cheerful giver), and its enormous army of paid emissaries, such as clergymen, managing boards and missionaries. On the surface Christianity is a beautiful doctrine of love, but underneath we find a strong undercurrent of *business*. Fully 500,000 people in America to-day are dependent upon the tribute of Christians for their daily bread.

THE BUSY MAN'S PLEA.

Life is a constant hustle. We hustle from the cradle to the grave. We take the good things that come our way, and we try to fight shy of adversity. We invest heavily in the sure things and risk a dollar on the hundred-to-one chances, and if some fellow comes along with a billion-to-one chance we would invest whether he had his credentials or not. Since there is "nothing to lose" we might as well be on the safe side. If we win,

we get a billion for practically nothing, and if we lose we will not miss it.

As we rush from home in the morning to catch the elevated for downtown, constantly glancing at the watch to see if we can make it in time; or at 10 o'clock, just after the foreman had been inspecting our work and had reminded us that the job had been promised at 10.30; or at noontime, when we hurriedly washed half the dirt from our hands and later found that the white bread was soiled by our finger-tips; or at evening, as we rushed lickety-split down the street to catch that 6.10 express, this thought has entered our brain: "Was Christ the Son of the Supreme Power?" And how do we treat the question? Do we rush off to the nearest library and take out all the books on history and religion and try to ascertain the facts for ourselves? Oh, no; instead, our brains evolve an answer like this: "I have joined the church, I have accepted Christ as my saviour, I have been promised eternal salvation, and I have been told that my name is recorded in a certain book in heaven which shows only those who will inherit eternal life. All this is mine if Jesus Christ is the Son of the Supreme Power. But if, after I die, I find that Christ was an impostor, I believe that I will at least fare as well as the men who during life refused to accept Christianity. And since I will not be the loser in either case, I regard it as a useless expenditure of time and energy to investigate the facts for myself."

This may be a sound, logical conclusion, from a purely blind standpoint, but it does not reveal any of the essential "faith" on which Christianity is built.

THE CAUSE OF THE DARK AGES.

The progress of Christianity has been aided to a large degree by ignorance. Christianity was born in ignorance. Christ's disciples were chosen from the ranks of the most ignorant. Saul of Tarsus seems to have been

the only advocate of Christianity in its early growth who possessed any notable amount of learning, and he received his knowledge of Christ and his philosophy from hearsay, Christ having died several years prior to Paul's conversion. The flocking of people to Rome during the heyday of the Roman Empire naturally included some of the followers of Christ. The semi-democratic political tendency of the time proved it to be a favorable spot for the growth of the original Christian religion, especially among the poorer and necessarily more ignorant classes. Perhaps not more than ten per cent. of the Christians of Rome during the reign of Constantine could read and write. It necessarily follows that the other ninety per cent.—a vast, overwhelming majority—received their entire information concerning the Christian religion from their leaders. They could not investigate their doubts for themselves. When they did not understand certain statements made by their leaders concerning the teachings of this wonderful Jesus, they confided their doubts to their leaders, who were kept busy "strengthening the brethren."

Christianity seems to have progressed very rapidly once it gained a foothold. In Rome a compromise between the Christian leaders and the leaders of paganism was arranged, which resulted in the birth of Roman Catholicism. Christ was the central figure of this curious mixture, which was set off by an endless array of pagan rituals and customs. It reminds me of a Sixth avenue dish of clam chowder—you can smell the clams all right, but all you can see is a mass of chopped potatoes, onions, parsnips, carrots, celery and cabbage. (I hope I haven't omitted anything.)

After Christianity had gained the ascendency in Rome, its influence gradually spread throughout what was the civilized world. The leaders of this new combination of Christianity and paganism soon found the batteries of the educated classes arrayed against them,

but it was like damming Niagara. The peculiar methods of organization, resulting in a complete subservience of the will of that great mass of ignorant followers to the will of their leaders, soon silenced all opposition. Those great universities of learning at Rome and in Greece were closed, the public schools were closed, learning was made a crime. Great monasteries were erected where none but priests were allowed to enter. The people became more and more ignorant; finally they were forbidden to read the Bible for fear they would dispute with the religious "authorities." Heresy was made a crime, punishable by death, and a premium was put upon lying, theft, adultery and even murder. That period in the world's history when Roman Catholicism ruled the world is the blackest of the entire record. It was when the world was groping in its night of enforced ignorance that Roman Catholicism controlled the governments of Europe. Bear in mind that this abject ignorance of the masses was brought about by direct commands of the leaders of Roman Catholicism, arguing that the more ignorant people are the more pliable and easily controlled they will be.

Roman Catholicism built up the most complete system of religious tyranny that the world has ever seen. The entire state and municipal governments were controlled, body and soul, by the despotic green-goods man in the Vatican at Rome. Laws, vicious in character, but bearing the approval of the Church, were unanimously passed by subsidized lawmakers, whose office and lives depended on the pleasure of crafty Rome. In the lawbooks of every nation of Europe at this time was written the following: "Failure to acknowledge the right of the Church over the *acts and thoughts* of the people is a crime punishable with death by torture." The Church did not stop with its success in having the laws passed, but carefully and religiously (?) saw that they were enforced. Thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of

thousands of human beings in whom the desire for free thought had been born were thrown to wild animals, guillotined or burned at the stake. From the fifth to the eleventh centuries after Christ constitutes that period in the world's history generally known even to Christian historians as the "Dark Ages." It dates from the ascendency of Christianity under Constantine to the time of Pope Innocent III, who proclaimed that he was the earthly king of kings, the sovereign of entire Europe. The Church had gradually bound the hands of the entire population, stifled their intellects, destroyed their love for freedom, branded their very minds with the mark of religious slavery. During this period Roman Catholicism was in charge of the governments, both municipal and national, and offered to the people the choice of three things: subservience to Roman Catholicism, tribute or death. The boasted intelligence of Greece, the dearly bought democracy of Rome, the very seeds of the brotherhood of man had been destroyed and forgotten. The world had gradually been forced back into abject barbarism. For nearly a thousand years Europe staggered, as though drunk, under the baneful rule of Christianity.

When Pope Leo X came to the Papal throne he found that his predecessors had almost exhausted the treasury. In order to increase the revenue he decided to put more life into the "indulgence" business. He decreed that you could lie, steal, or commit murder, provided you bought indulgence. This indulgence was a receipt which entitled the holder to enter heaven after death, provided his record was otherwise in accordance with the "infallible" rules laid down by the Church. You were supposed to present the receipt to St. Peter, when your train stopped at the Celestial City; he would certify the Pope's signature and telephone the Recording Angel to check as paid for the crime that was charged against you. In Germany the Dominican Friars, an en-

terprising set of religious leaders, obtained from Leo a monopoly for the sale of indulgences in that country. A Friar, named Tetzel, was elected president and general manager of this Indulgence Trust. He ran a regular "sin" clearing-house. He acted as wholesale distributing agent for the commodity (which was sold at so much per, like a loaf of bread or a pound of cheese); he collected the trust's share of the filthy lucre obtained from the deluded people by the retail agents.

But Tetzel had troubles of his own. Another set of Friars, known as the Augustinian Friars, became jealous of the trust's prosperity, and for a long time the trust and the independent combine were sawing at one another's necks. While this fight for the deluded people's money was going on, a brave man—Martin Luther, Professor of Theology in the University of Wittenberg—sprang into prominence. This man stands out in history as a beacon light. That memorable day in 1517, when he nailed his ninety-five theses on the church door, marks a dividing line between the forced barbarism of Christianity and modern progress. The Diet of Worms (1521), the Diet of Spires (1529), the Diet of Augsburg (1555), the defeat of the Spanish Armada (1588), and the Edict of Nantes (1598) are prominent stepping-stones that mark the downfall of Roman Catholicism and the progress of religious freedom.

In France (1572) the opposition to Roman Catholicism had grown quite formidable, in spite of ostracism, torture and assassination. In fact, it looked as if the reformers were going to accomplish the downfall of Roman Catholicism in that country. The Church, already drunk with human blood, planned a *coup d'état* which well illustrates the depths into which the philosophy of Jesus had been dragged by the leaders of that body of hypocrites which styled itself "the Church of the Living God." Catherine de Medici, who was at that time practically in control of the government of France,

forced the sovereign, Charles IX, to sign an edict which was in effect a decree of extermination for all those opposed to the authority and tyranny of Papacy. In the dead of the night (August 23, 1572) the tocsin was sounded throughout Paris. The emissaries of Rome sprang to their bloody work. Ten thousand defenseless people were murdered in their beds by order of the "infallible Vicar of Christ." For several days the savage slaughter went on until 65,000 people lay motionless in death—a fitting testimonial to the hellish savagery of barbaric popecraft.

Was the omnipotent Supreme Power the author of the religion that made possible the horrors of St. Bartholomew's Day?

THE MISTAKE OF MOSES.

RULES for living which are economic and expeditious are to be found in great numbers in the Bible. Undoubtedly most of the philosophy presented by Moses and other Jewish religious leaders, taken as a whole, is as high and as pure as the world has ever seen. In Exodus 20:1-17 Moses gives a code of morals which he claims to have received from the Supreme Power. Stripped of their religious cloture they may be summarized as follows: That the worship of idols is useless; that swearing does not benefit; that regular periods of rest should interpose between regular periods of work; that it is the duty of children to respect and value the counsel of their parents; that the taking of another's life is pernicious and reactive; that adultery is wrong; that theft is never justifiable; that lying is cowardly, and that envy and covetousness often lead to transgression.

In the main these deductions appeal to the best element in man's nature. The seeker for truth, in his wanderings over the sea of religious thought, can here cast anchor, for a sufficient trace of truth is present to warrant further exploration. Moses claims not only that the Supreme Power was the source of this philosophy, but that the words themselves are *verbatim* of those which the Supreme Power wrote with his own hand and intrusted to Moses for circulation among the Children of Israel.

In order to get the entire truth in regard to the matter it would be necessary to ask Moses a few questions. But since circumstances render such a course impossible, I suppose I shall have to be content with merely stating them:

1. Moses, the ten commandments which you have recorded in the Bible, and which you state were handed to you by the Supreme Power personally, are almost identical with a summary of the teachings found in the Vedas, the ancient religious books of the Hindus. These Vedas were written many centuries before you were born. Is it not possible that you *copied your philosophy from these books?*

2. Your conception of the personality of the Supreme Power is identical in almost every detail with that held by the Chinese hundreds of years before you were born, the ancient Chinese theory of the personality of the Supreme Power being as follows: "The author and preserver of all things; the principle of everything that exists; eternal, immovable and independent; his power knows no bounds; his sight equally comprehends the past, the present and the future, penetrating even to the inmost recesses of the heart. Heaven and earth are under his government; all events are consequences of his will; he is pure, holy and impartial; wickedness offends his sight; but he beholds with an eye of compassion the virtuous actions of men. Severe, yet just, he punishes vice, even on the throne; good, merciful and full of pity, he relents on the repentance of the wicked. Calamities are only salutary warnings, which his fatherly goodness gives to men to induce them to amend." (This passage is taken *verbatim* from these books written hundreds of years before Moses's time, and were available when Moses is alleged to have received his divinely inspired "Word" from heaven.) Moses, is it not possible that you pilfered your ideas concerning the personality of the Supreme Power from the above source?

3. In the Bundehesh, the "Old Testament" of the heathen Fire Worshipers, which was written centuries before your time, it is related that in a certain garden the Supreme Power placed the first two human beings. In that garden were two trees, the juice of which would

give immortality to those who drank it. God forbade the two inhabitants to touch the tree. But, the story goes on, the *devil*, in the form of a *serpent*, appeared and tempted the *woman*, the result being that Adam and Eve were guilty of sinning and were *driven* from the garden. Moses, your account of the lives of the alleged first two human beings bears such a close resemblance to the one given in this book of the heathen sect referred to, and since your account was written many centuries after the Bundehesh, is it not possible that you pilfered the story you relate in the Bible from this source?

4. Moses, your account giving the method by which the Supreme Power made woman is so unlikely that I desire the authority for your statements.

5. Science proves conclusively to us that the world is many millions of years old. Produce your authority for the statements which you make in Genesis in regard to the method and manner of the creation of the earth. (NOTE.—Since the world was made so many million years before man appeared on earth, it is impossible to produce *any* evidence corroborative of Moses's account.)

6. The earth is only an infinitesimal part of the universe. There are millions upon millions of other celestial bodies as large and larger than the world, yet you state that while it took the Supreme Power two days to get the earth in shape it was necessary to devote only one day to the making of the stars. In fact, you refer to the making of the stars as merely incidental. Is it not possible that you borrowed part of your story of the creation from the Chinese and manufactured the remainder to give it a touch of originality?

HAS TIME LIMITS?

Considerable argument has been advanced upon the question as to whether science and the Bible agree from a geological and astronomical standpoint. I have no desire to rehash the old arguments or to go into a crit-

ical discussion of the subject. Instead I shall examine in detail the statements made in the first verse of the first book of Moses's writings—Genesis 1:1.

In beginning his narrative of "inspired" facts concerning prehistoric conditions, Moses makes this statement: *In the beginning* God created the heaven and the earth. And here Moses has made two misstatements.

There was no beginning. Eternity is without beginning or end. It is from the everlasting to the everlasting—forever. Its existence has no limits. The universe has existed from the limitless past and must exist throughout the limitless future. A beginning necessarily indicates an ending. A beginning is the accidental or natural production of a condition which must of necessity collapse when the power which is responsible for its maintenance is spent or withdrawn. Eternity not only refers to the future, but also to the past.

The birth and death of conditions are inseparably linked, though separated more or less widely by periods of "existence" or activity. You go for a walk. First you lift your foot, then it is lifted over a certain space and finally it is placed on the ground. Here we see the *beginning* of the step, its *period* of *existence,* and then its *ending.* A second step is then taken, and a third, a fourth, and so on, each step having its distinct component periods of existence. Finally the last step is taken, and the journey which had been begun has its ending. So it is with everything in this life. History is a record of actions begun and ended, of men who have been born and who have died, of kingdoms which have risen and which have fallen, of ideas revered and forgotten. But not so with eternity, which has no such periods of existence. Yesterday, to-day and forever are one interminable cycle. Our so-called "division of time" into seconds, minutes, hours, etc., is merely a system established for convenience; but time itself has no such division. Our little earth revolves on its axis and inter-

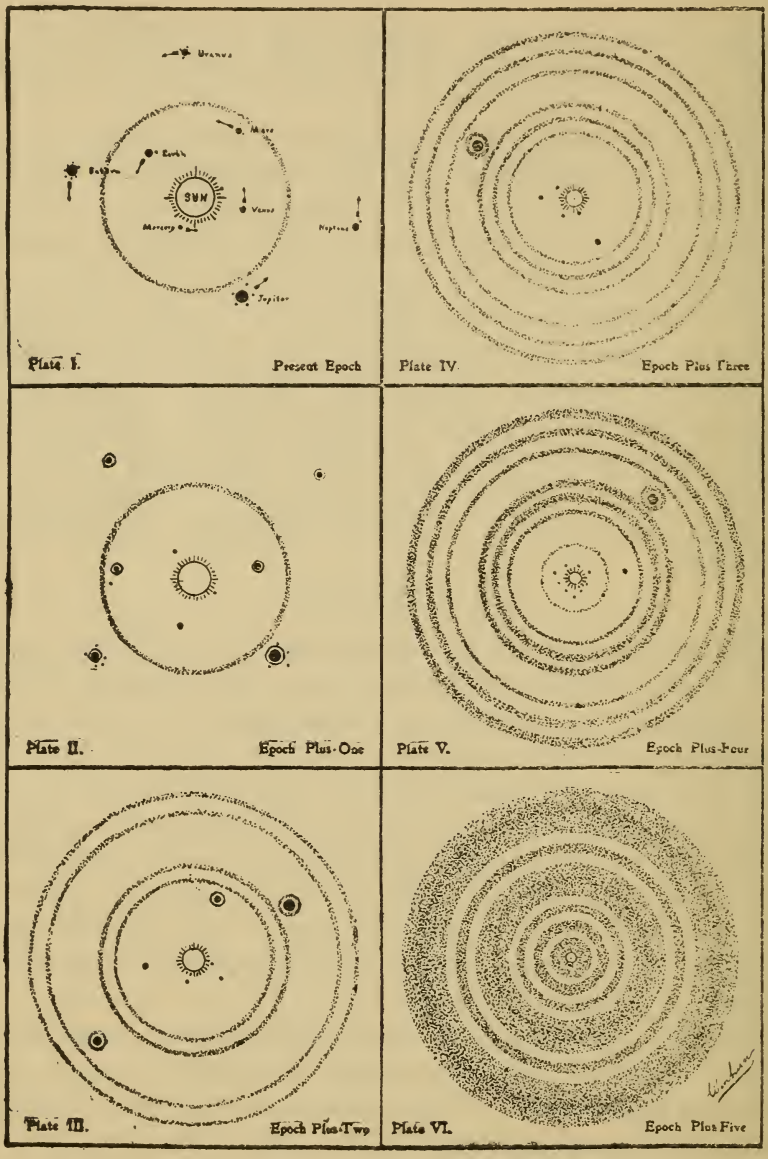
mittently shuts out the sunlight, but it is erroneous to suppose that time is thus divided into sections or atoms of existence.

Eternity is commonly supposed to be a thing of the future, to have its *beginning* at the remote time when the world shall have passed away. But not so; we are living in eternity now. Our ancestors were living in eternity and our posterity will be living in eternity. Men come and go, nations rise and fall, worlds form and disappear, suns burst forth and go out, but time—eternal time—is not thereby decreased. Bale the water from the ocean, bottle up the atmosphere which envelops the earth, scatter to the four winds the soil upon which we tread, and then Father Time will be as young as when your task was begun. "In the beginning" is therefore impossible.

THE "CREATION."

The last portion of this first verse of the Bible states that "God created the heaven and the earth." There is no doubt in my mind as to an omnipotent power being responsible for the existence of the heavens and the earth. But that the Supreme Power "created" them is not borne out by the known facts in regard to such matters. "To create" in the sense used means to make something out of nothing. But science has proved to us that the earth is a mass composed entirely of the skeletons of former worlds. Instead of being specially "created" it is merely a made-over world.

Matter is indestructible and therefore never underwent creation. Science has been able to divide matter into molecules and atoms. These atoms can be detached and compounded, transformed from solid into liquid, from liquid into gas and from gaseous matter back into the solid or liquid form, *but not one atom can be destroyed.* All the chemists on earth, with all their wonderful knowledge, cannot take a single molecule of water and destroy



DISSOLUTION

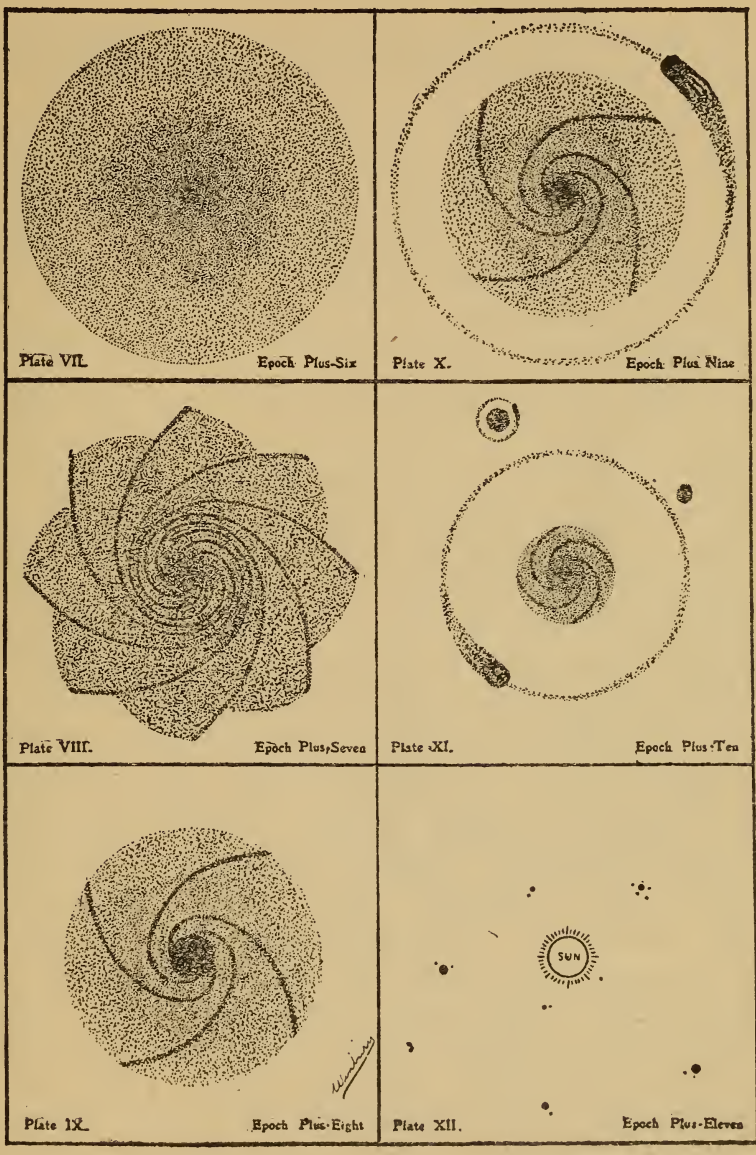


Plate VII. Epoch Plus-Six
Plate X. Epoch Plus Nine
Plate VIII. Epoch Plus-Seven
Plate XI. Epoch Plus-Ten
Plate IX. Epoch Plus-Eight
SUN
Plate XII. Epoch Plus-Eleven

EVOLUTION

it, or even destroy any part of its component atoms. The existence of matter is therefore eternal—without beginning or end.

In order to prove that Moses's conception of prehistoric astronomical events was erroneous, I shall refer the reader to what is commonly called the Nebula Theory. In Plate I we see the solar system as it is at the present time, the sun in the center acting as a fountain of light, heat and energy and also as a common hub for the orbits of the nine planets. Nearest to the sun we see Mercury —35,000,000 miles distant—the smallest and most recently formed of the known planets. It travels around the sun in 88 days, or at the terrific speed of 30 miles per second. Next is Venus—66,000,000 miles distant from the sun. A little older than Mercury, it takes 225 days for Venus to complete its trip around the sun, or at a rate of 22 miles per second.

Third in order—and about 92,000,000 miles distant from the sun—we find a little ball, about 25,000 miles in circumference, which is commonly called the Earth. It was on this little planet that a certain wise man named Moses once lived. Here also a Chinaman by the name of Confucius lived. A Hindu by the name of Buddha is also reputed to have passed a short but eventful time upon its surface. Among others too numerous to mention were Solomon, Jesus Christ, Mohammed, Joseph Smith and Alexander Dowie, the last-named of which has previously made two trips to the merry little planet and who is now making his farewell tour. It takes 365 days for the earth to complete its trip around the sun, traveling at a rate of 18 miles per second. Next we see Mars, the nearest of the superior planets to the earth. It is 140,000,000 miles distant from the sun. It takes 668 days to traverse its orbit, traveling at 15 miles per second. Mars is older than the earth and is fast becoming unfit for habitation. Its supply of moisture is becoming less and less, it being necessary for the inhab-

itants to dig huge canals and force water for thousands of miles. (I have often wondered whether the canals were built by private corporations or by the municipalities, whether they had a water trust similar to our Standard Oil trust with their money-mad Rockefellers, Rogerses and Belmonts.)

Next we come to the speedway of the solar system, where there are no laws against speeding (reckless automobilists please take notice). About 150,000, more or less, little chunks of matter, varying in size from pebbles to 600 miles in diameter, are rushing around the sun. These little rocks are no doubt the remains of a former planet, whose size was probably smaller than the earth. Next in order of distance from the sun we find the giant planet Jupiter. This planet is older than any of those previously mentioned, but it is so large that it has not yet sufficiently cooled to allow plant or animal life to exist thereon. Great clouds of heat-laden moisture surround the planet and effectually prevent the searching eye of the telescope from revealing much that otherwise might be learned concerning it. But its heat is slowly passing off, and some day—millions of years hence—a little protozoan will begin to wiggle, acting as a forerunner of the evolutionary epochs with which we are familiar. Jupiter is 475,000,000 miles distant from the sun, and goes gliding along through space at the rate of about 9 miles per second.

Next comes Saturn. It is older than Jupiter, and is 872,000,000 miles from the sun. It moves through space at the rate of 5 miles per second. Saturn is the picturesque planet, eight moons playing "ring-around-the-rosie" with the old fellow, while a series of rings, always on the go, use him for a common hub. The rings, though apparently a cloud of much density, are in reality composed of millions of little moons, or, rather, each ring represents a former moon which has broken up into small bits which continue to circle around the planet. It is

quite probable that Saturn is inhabitable, though the distance is so great that we are unable to determine with any degree of certainty. Further out we see Uranus, which is so far away that comparatively nothing is known concerning its condition. Though, since it is older than any of the planets that I have mentioned, and since in size it is smaller than Saturn, it is less likely to be inhabitable. It is 1,754,000,000 miles from the sun. It completes its journey around the sun in 84 of our years at a rate of about 4 miles per second. Neptune, the oldest of the known planets, comes next. Its distance from the sun is 2,750,000,000 miles, being further than any of the other planets. Neptune, though being a little larger than Uranus, is so much older that it is probably not inhabitable. It completes its orbit of the sun in 165 of our years, and at the rate of about 3 1/3 miles per second.

This is about the condition in which we find the solar system at the present time. Suppose we look forward a few million years. Plate II will explain the probable condition of our little group of worlds at that time, which for convenience we will call "Epoch Plus-One." The sun has shrunk considerably. Its power as a source of heat and light has appreciably diminished. Several small planets have been thrown off and the power of the sun having become less the new planets have been thrown only a short distance. Mercury has lost its gaseous atmosphere and settled down to that intermediate age when strenuous human beings take possession. Venus also has not only become inhabitable, but human beings have advanced to that momentous stage of discussing the value of teachings of men similar to Jesus Christ, Mohammed and Confucius. Theories and beliefs about spiritual and material matters are being gradually broken down by discoveries of *facts* as revealed in the sciences.

The earth has changed also. The moon has crumbled at last, but goes faithfully on circling around his ancient mother. On the earth we find many changes. The oceans have receded toward the poles. The equator falls on nothing but land. But the inhabitants have not been idle. Many great canals have been dug so that water can be forced to all parts of the world. Many problems which perplex us to-day will have been solved and forgotten.

Poor old Mars has become a fossil. Life is extinct; vegetation went first, then the artificial methods invented by the Martians to prolong existence have proved inadequate. The Speedway of the solar system will be still a speedway, but its individual parts will have crumbled up into very small pieces and become almost invisible. Jupiter has cooled down. Vegetation has begun to appear. One of its moons has crumbled, but the others hold their own. Saturn has added more "rings," its remaining moons having broken up. Uranus still keeps on his course, but his moons have broken up. Neptune has become unable to hold together, and a new "speedway" has been formed.

Plate III shows the probable condition of the solar system at that future date which we shall call "Epoch Plus-Two," millions of years after that depicted in Plate II. The sun, it will be noticed, is smaller. Its light and heat have also diminished. Many bits of white-hot substance have been thrown off, which are gradually forming into future planets. Mercury has reached the heyday of its existence. "Prophets," "teachers" and "messengers of God" have come forth. The mystery of existence has been artfully used and the inhabitants of Mercury have given up their time, their money, their all and blindly follow the "doctrines" invented and fostered by their hypocritical brothers, without which no world is complete. Venus has reached her "canal" period.

Impenetrable silence reigns on the old earth. The end of human existence has come. Life of all kinds has passed away. The atmosphere has disappeared. The shrug of the forest oaks, the caw-caw of the flying crow, and the ding-a-lang of the blacksmith's anvil will have been heard for the last time, and the world will have settled down to wait—wait—wait for the final consummation. Mars has reached the crumbling period. Jupiter is having his first lot of human beings. (Here's success to the sons of the giant planet!) Its other moons have crumbled. Saturn is undecided whether to crumble or not. Its rings will have become less dense and more extended. Uranus has broken up, and in obedience to the laws of nature continues to circle around the sun and await the final end of our solar system. The fragments of Neptune have become smaller and smaller.

Plate IV depicts the ravages that another epoch of time will have had upon the solar system. The sun has become a small red ball, surrounded by an innumerable horde of small planets. Mercury has reached its canal period. All life has become extinct on Venus. The earth—that small piece of real estate which Napoleon sought to manage and which the Standard Oil Company tried to steal—will have crumbled. On Jupiter they have begun to discuss the various religions of the "Sons of God" and other "prophets." "Divine messengers" will be working overtime in their eagerness to grasp the almighty dollar, and the inhabitants of Jupiter will be asking themselves whether after all the "proofs" and counter proofs, all religions are not humanly invented fakes. Saturn has broken up housekeeping, and, mingling with the fragments of her former moons, she goes circling around the sun.

Another jump of a few million years will probably find the solar system arranged as in Plate V. Mercury has crumbled, leaving only the barren Venus and the mighty Jupiter. On the latter planet life will have be-

come a burden. The scarcity of water and the rarity of the atmosphere will call for the best inventive genius of that age to prolong the existence of the flickering spark of life.

In Plate VI the next decisive step in the progress of dissolution is seen. All the planets have crumbled, but continue to circle around the once mighty sun.

Ages pass in which the only appreciable change will be the tendency of the fragments of the former planets and moons to become smaller and smaller until the solar system will appear as a large cloud of pulverized matter circling around a red globe. Each of these pulverized particles of matter is in turn divided until the solar system becomes a rarefied mass of molecules (see Plate VIII), and finally each molecule will divide into its component atoms.

Here we have the complete consummation of the former solar system. Here is the dividing line between the end of the old and beginning of the new solar system. The sun which had maintained such a wonderful influence over the particles of matter that formed the old solar system is at last extinguished. The freed atoms rush toward a common center. This centripetal tendency will cause the mass to inaugurate a revolving motion. The whirling mass will become more dense. Under the great pressure atoms will combine forming new molecules, the friction of which will produce heat and light. And trillions of miles away on some planet, a member of some other solar system, an enthusiastic astronomer will announce to his associates that a "new nebula has appeared." (See Plate VIII.) The tendency of the mass of rarefied matter to be attracted toward the center will cause it to become more and more dense. The natural tendency to be attracted toward the center of the nebula being overcome by reason of the rapidity with which the outer edge of the nebula is forced to move, a certain portion flies off into space. When

this portion reaches that point in space (Plate X), where the tendency to fly off and the tendency to be attracted toward the common center have been neutralized, it continues to circle around the parent body in the form of a ring. By a natural process a center of attraction is formed in this ring which causes the mass to assume the shape of a nebulous ball. This centripetal action on the part of the truant portion of the nebula evolves a condition similar to that of the parent body prior to the flight of the truant portion. In other words, the outer portion of this revolving truant portion is subsequently thrown off into space. (See Plate XI.) The same laws that govern the actions in the first instance apply here also. This new portion takes its place at that point where the tendencies to fly away and to be attracted have been neutralized.

Millions and millions of years pass away, punctuated at intervals by the separation of rings from the nebula and their subsequent formation into spherical-shaped bodies which will circle around the parent nebula, the farthest away being the oldest in regard to separation from the center of the system. At first these newly formed bodies shine by their own light, but they gradually lose their heat and become more and more dense, until were it not for the reflected light of the central body their existence would become unknown. Plates XI and XII explain at a glance the formation of a new solar system, the number, size, location and condition of the various planets and moons being, of course, imaginative. But by no means could their existence be attributed to chance. On the other hand, were it possible to know all the laws of nature it would be comparatively easy to calculate the time when a future planet would begin its separation from the parent nebula. We would also be able to determine the distance that such a future planet would be placed from the future sun. We would also be able to state the weight of the newly formed planet.

Because we are unable now to determine the exact condition of the solar system one hundred million years from now is no reason why we should decide that such a proposition is unanswerable. It rather denotes that the knowledge which we possess is limited. In the few thousands of years that the human race has maintained its supremacy over the other animals, we have by observation, experiment and research *discovered* a large number of *facts*. But there are many more as yet undiscovered facts, and for ages to come man will compete with man in heroic efforts to grasp truth—more truth. While our knowledge is great, yet our ignorance is doubtless greater.

In speaking of those things of importance concerning which we know nothing, we use the hypothetical, "I believe." We say, "I believe it will rain to-night." This means that, judging from the appearance of certain conditions which seem to us to exist prior to rains, the indications are that rain will fall. The hypothesis appears to us to be all right, but how often does the *result* prove that our hypotheses were imaginative? On the other hand, our well-regulated Weather Bureau is able to state with almost absolute accuracy the condition of the weather for to-morrow. The reason is simple. The Weather Bureau possesses many *facts* concerning which we are in ignorance. While our predictions are based on hypothetical "thinks" and "believes," the predictions of the Weather Bureau are based largely on facts. Sometimes the weather man misses it, but the reason for his failure to predict correctly was because there existed certain facts concerning which even the Bureau was in ignorance. Ignorance and failure are inseparable.

That there are facts which we shall never know, I am unprepared to express an opinion. That there will come a time when all the problems of life, death and eternity will be solved is in itself problematic. Our store of knowledge is being constantly added to, but since we are

unable to state (*a*) how much we have yet to learn, (*b*) how much time we have in which to learn it, and (*c*) the rate at which we will be able to obtain, absorb and apply the knowledge that we may acquire, it is not possible to arrive at an intelligent opinion.

Yet our knowledge of astronomical facts is by no means meager. The astronomer can tell how many eclipses of the moon there will be in 2200 A. D. He can tell to the second when the eclipse will take place, also the positions, inclination and distances of the moon, earth and sun at that time. Wonderful, you say. Not at all. The astronomer has simply gone over his accumulation of *facts* with a critical eye and figured out an additional fact with pencil and paper.

THE PROOF.

Perhaps you consider my story of the evolution and dissolution of heavenly bodies as entirely imaginative. But the facts in the possession of the astronomer of today are, in the main, corroborative. The Nebula Theory is almost universally accepted as the most plausible theory regarding the life history of suns and planets.

Of course, even were it possible to take the testimony of every human being who had lived on the earth from the time of the ancient cave-dwellers of Greece down to the present day, we would be unable to state *from the evidence secured* just how the world was made. The world was already here when the first man appeared, and man's first existence here has been so recent that scarcely any appreciable change has taken place either in the density or the external appearance of the earth. The history of the human race would cover but a few thousand years, while the history of the earth and solar system extends for many millions of years before the appearance of man and will extend for many millions of years after the human race has disappeared.

Direct evidence regarding the formation of the earth being impossible, it becomes necessary to theorize, using such proved facts as we do possess as a basis. Look at the stars on a clear night. We see some six thousand, more or less, and with a telescope we can see many more, the number apparently increasing according to the power of the telescope used. It is but natural to suppose that since each of these stars is the center of other solar systems, we might possibly find other solar systems in various stages of formation and dissolution.

Point a common telescope toward the belt of Orion, and—yes, there you are! A solar system is really being formed before our eyes! A further examination of the universe will reveal *six thousand* of the nebulæ. The illustration marked "Exhibit One" is a reproduction from a photograph of the spiral nebula in Canes Venatici. "Exhibit Two" consists of six other nebulæ, visible to the astronomer. Now, do not think that these are imaginative conceptions of the artist's idle moments; they are made from *actual photographs* of the nebulæ as they were seen by the eye of the camera. To me, "Exhibit One" is especially interesting. Millions upon millions of miles in diameter, this whirlwind of matter, revolving around its center of attraction, is bowling on through space and acting as a message from the Supreme Power to show us how the worlds were made. A careful, conscientious study of these embryo solar systems cannot but convince us that the Nebula Theory of the evolution of matter is true.

WHAT MOSES SAID.

But Moses says that the Supreme Power *created* the universe! Just spoke the word, and, Aladdin-like, it appeared before him! Moses made the mistake that other noted philosophers of his time had made. He supposed that the earth was the center of the universe. Moses did not *know* that this earth was only a drop in

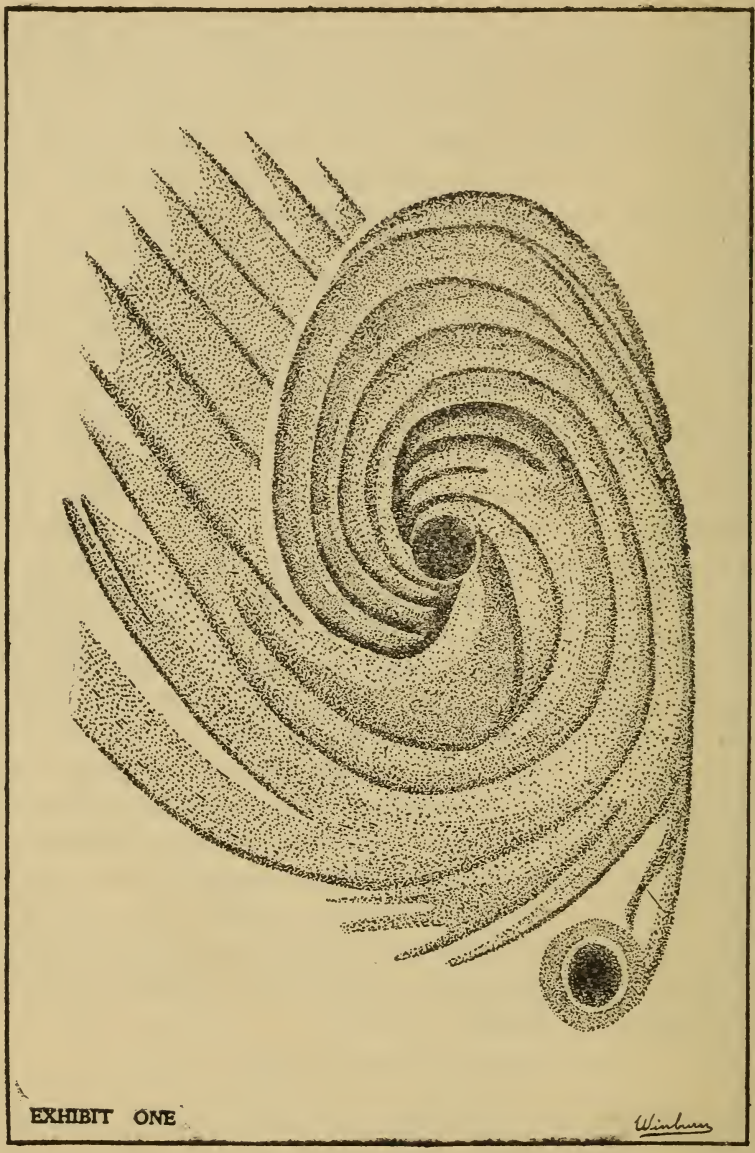


EXHIBIT ONE

Spiral Nebula in Canes Venatici

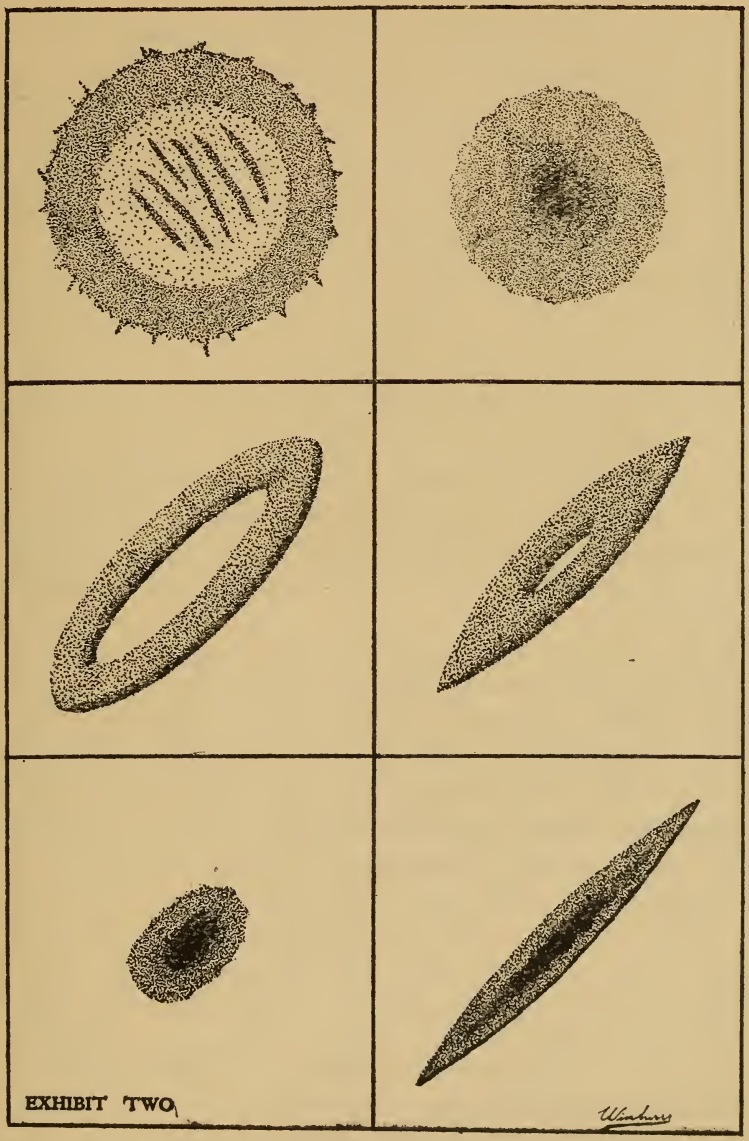


EXHIBIT TWO

Various Nebulæ Visible to the Astronomer

the bucket of eternal space. He did not *know* that there are millions and billions of other worlds flying through space, each pursuing its individual life and contributing its substance to the fulfilling of the laws of evolution and dissolution. Moses did not *know* that the modern telescope would enable us to look out into space and see worlds being *made from preexisting matter.*

Ignorance may be bliss, but it is also the president of the failure trust. Moses's statements in regard to prehistoric events were not inspired, but were based upon the then existing traditions, which had perhaps been handed down from father to son for many generations. It is impossible that the Supreme Power would have caused Moses to make statements which were untrue. For, though we know nothing concerning the personality (?) of the Supreme Power, yet it is hardly possible that telling fairy tales is one of his traits of character.

Moses not only makes many statements which science has proved to be untrue, but he goes so far as to put the words into the mouth of the Supreme Power. Here is blasphemy, the most damnable blasphemy! Moses invents falsehoods and then tells the world that the Supreme Power was the author of those falsehoods. Is our "God" a liar, a corrupter of men's morals?

Moses states that the Supreme Power created the earth, but the fact is that the earth is a mass of evoluted matter. Moses states that the Supreme Power *created* the first man in the image of "God," and that he also *created* Eve, using one of Adam's ribs as a basis; but science proves beyond an intelligent doubt that man is an evoluted animal and a member of the anthropoid species. However haughty and proud the human race may become, we cannot destroy the fact that man is an evoluted product. The gibbon, the gorilla, the chimpanzee, the orang, while now far below us in intelligence, were the cousins of our prehistoric ancestors. Adam may

have been the name of the first member of the race that wore a fig-leaved petticoat, but Adam's ancestors were undoubtedly skilled in the sublime art of shaking cocoanut trees.

Moses goes into a detailed account of the deluge and of the acts of "Noah." In the Hindu Bible we find an account so similar to that of the Christian Bible that it is more than probable that Moses simply translated his account from the Mahabharata. The book referred to mentions the ark, the pairing of animals, of the landing on the mountain peak and the sending forth of the dove. The truth about the matter is that there was a deluge, which occurred many thousands of years ago, so long a time before Moses's day that practically no trace of it remained except in the traditionary accounts inscribed on the monuments of the heathen. Moses, raised as Pharaoh's son, had all the opportunities of access to these hieroglyphical inscriptions, which undoubtedly furnished the basis of his "inspired" narrative.

We have but to go to the ancient Bible of the Hindus to find the accepted Mosaic conception of the personality of the Supreme Power, and also the ten commandments. In the Mahabharata, a sacred book of the Brahmans, which was written centuries before Moses was born, we find a chapter on the personality of the Supreme Power that is absolutely identical with the "inspired" description as given by Moses.

Then to cap the climax, Moses is heralded as the prophet by the Supreme Power—the official representative of the Supreme Power on earth. That portion of the Bible which he contributed is supposed to have been inspired, which in reality means written by the Supreme Power. But if we are to be honest in our search for truth facts will compel us to exclude the Mosaic writings from consideration as "inspired" fact. We often hear of ministers even who confess that Moses's ideas of prehistoric matters were mythical. In fact, it is an open

secret in Christian theological institutions that Moses's fanciful narrative of the "beginning" is untenable.

MOSES AND CHRIST.

And do you know that to discredit Moses is the strongest possible argument against the claims of Christ to divinity? For, did not Christ fully indorse Moses's teachings in Luke 16:31, and did he not put his signet of approval on Moses's life and career in Matt. 17:3? Moses may have been a smart man, but it is hardly possible that he possessed that degree of smartness calculated to deceive an omniscient Supreme Power, such as Christ professed to be. If common sense tells us that Moses's writings were not true (even in the smallest detail), then our conception of the character of the Supreme Power will not admit of his joining hands with an impostor. Truth and untruth are not unearthed in the same vein. A plagiarizing recorder of traditions and the personification of eternal truth could not consistently pose as twin brothers at a "transfiguration."

If the Supreme Power was not the author (by inspiration) of the untruths recorded in Genesis, then the religion of Christ is a human invention. And Christ's advocacy of Moses's integrity is an admission of his humanity, and is also proof of the falsity of his claims to divinity.

THE FOUR INDICTMENTS AGAINST CHRISTIANITY.

I. DRUNKENNESS.

IS the Church in earnest in its desire to brighten lives and save souls? Is the Church consistent in the efforts which it puts forth to uplift man, elevate his ideals and incite him on toward success? If so, then why does not the Church throw out its mighty arm and remove from man's pathway that fearful, hideous, damning stumbling-block—the saloon?

The clergy constitute the most powerful system of platform orators that could be conceived, and their constituency—members and attendants of churches—constitute a vast majority of the voting strength of this republic. And yet, with all this influence, with all this opportunity, with all this strength, the Church of Christ—the much-heralded catholic religion—stands idly by and complacently sees 100,000 lives blighted by whisky annually, many thousand drink-crazed lunatics cast into insane asylums, drink-tainted young men sent to State prisons, 75,000 homes broken up by drink, 75,000 innocent orphans and 50,000 widows compelled to depend upon charity for their daily bread as a result of whisky's action on the brain of our fellow human beings. And besides this we must record the additional sacrifice of 25,000 lives annually, which are chargeable directly and indirectly to the influences of distilled and malted liquors.

In this country where the so-called "catholic religion" is strong and deeply rooted we find the young man, advised and accompanied by prelates and laymen, clinking his first glass of wine at the banquet table. Later on he is initiated into the enticing game of taking odds at one of our racetracks, owned by members of the Church of

Christ, or at one of our poolrooms, which are supplied with race information by a corporation controlled by Christian scribes and pharisees. Later on this same young man is led to the Tenderloin, an institution allowed to exist in a Christian-controlled city, where more vice, more hell is born in one night than the Church with its slow-moving conservatism will be able to counteract in a half-century. Finally this young man, intoxicated with the exuberance of drink-inflamed "life" and jollity, hopelessly fascinated by that inseparable trio —wine, women and song—plunges headlong upon a career of dissipation and ruin, punctuated at intervals by high-balls and beer.

What is the Church doing to counteract the influence of the saloon? "Well," the Christian replies, "we have erected orphan asylums and widows' homes, we send clergymen to the prisons to induce the prisoners to accept Christ as their saviour, we publish leaflets and tracts which warn the young against the dangers of the saloon, and when we are thirsty we slip in the side door so that the inexperienced will not see our hypocrisy." I am speaking of the attitude of the Church as a body. Individual churchmen sometimes come out flat-footed and denounce the saloon as a legalized hell-gate; but these isolated cases are frowned upon even by the very elect. Many high priests of Christianity, those whose hearts and lives are supposed to be consecrated to Christ's service, are not only deaf to the cry of the drunkard, the pleading of the widow and the wail of the orphan, but actually indorse and patronize the saloon. Our bottle-bummer Bishop Potter has put his hand to the plow and clergymen and laymen all over the country have patted the beer-boozer Bishop on the back and have raised their glasses high in the air as they shout: "Here's to the health of Christianity." The Subway Tavern, on Bleecker street, New York City, commonly called "Potter's Saloon," or more appropriately, "Potter's

Field," is primarily a place for dispensing intoxicating liquors. The presence of women in the saloon is no innovation or sign of respectability, as women are found in the back rooms of every saloon in that district. This Subway Tavern is the entering wedge of an effort to fasten the whisky habit upon those who would otherwise avoid it. The approval which has been placed upon it by certain supposedly respectable Christians will lure to the saloon persons who would have otherwise stayed away. Its bid for women and family trade is particularly pernicious. The most important influence the saloons of the East Side have on the tenements is that they rob the poor of their meager earnings. And when we observe the ruin among the tenement-dwellers caused by the drink evil, we cannot figure out how even a "reform" saloon will benefit the poor man or his family. Instead of devoting our time and energy in trying to "elevate" that which is undeniably rotten to the core, I cannot understand why we should not entirely uproot the evil and plant in its stead something which would guarantee at least some return for the time and money invested.

For the benefit of Bishop Potter and his supporters the following article culled from the New York *American* of December 23, 1903, is interesting in many ways. The most interesting feature in this connection is the activity of "Father" Foy and the Children's Societies in cleaning up the work which a Christian city and country allow the "devil" to accomplish unhampered:

> "Reeling across car tracks, escaping death under the wheels of a trolley car; staggering up over the curb and falling senseless upon the pavement, her head resting against a big wooden box, pretty Jenny Reynolds, of Jersey City, has thrown all the charity organizations of that place into a fever of exalted wonderment and indignation.
>
> "In plain language, Jenny was drunk—hopelessly drunk; and the indignation referred to is caused by

the fact that somebody was mean enough to sell the little girl the liquor that brutalized her.

"It was 7 o'clock Monday night when Jenny was found dead drunk on the sidewalk, near the corner of York and Washington streets. As quickly as was possible she was taken to the hospital, where the doctors worked over her for ten hours before she was resuscitated. For a long time it looked as though the case was hopeless, but by the use of the stomach-pump, aided by every other known remedy, the little girl's life was at last saved.

"Miss Day and Miss Bradford, head workers in the Children's Aid Society and the Whittier House Settlement, together with Father Foy, of the Catholic Children's Society, are thoroughly interested in the unfortunate child's case, and will do all they can for her.

"The Reynolds family live on the third floor, rear, of No. 150 Steuben street. They have two rooms. In the two rooms dwell the father, mother and seven children, the oldest being fifteen, the youngest less than a year. It is a miserable habitation, bare, cheerless, wind-swept, desolate.

"When asked if she gave the children beer or whisky, the mother answered with a sickly smile: 'Yes, sometimes.' 'I don't,' said the father, 'I wouldn't waste no beer or whisky on them kids.' The 'kids' looked as though they were not counting to any great extent upon a 'Merry Christmas.' In their poor little faces there was none of the gladness that one looks for in children's eyes at this season of the year."

I hereby charge Christianity with aiding and abetting an attempt to stultify the brain and weaken the body of mankind by allowing the saloon to exist.

II. POVERTY.

"The poor always ye have with you." These words of Christ indicate that we should always have two extreme classes of society—the pauper and the millionaire. Rich men often quote this passage to condone their own parsimony, contending that poverty is eternal. But it seems to me that a catholic religion would teach men a

different doctrine than this. Poverty is not a permanent institution—it can not be a permanent institution. When men—thinking men—become freed from dollar-mad influences, realize the real meaning of the brotherhood of man, and wake up to the fact that *poverty* is the forerunner of *disease*, and that disease is the forerunner of *death*, we shall see poverty removed.

Hundreds of thousands of children die in the slums of our great cities every year. Poverty, in the form of lack of food, lack of fresh air and lack of medical attention, invites disease, and then—death. The parents—themselves reared in the slums—work their lives away in the sweatshops, earning scarcely enough to keep life within the body. They and their children, poorly fed, poorly clothed, are huddled together like hogs in foul, death-breeding tenements. Little babes are born; they raise their little eyes in wonderment at the strange sights of this great world. A few days, a few months or a few years pass, and then the poor little innocent child, unable to withstand the deadly germs that infest its home, loses the luster of its eyes, and a slow, insidious pallor creeps over the little one's face. There is no money for the doctor, there is no money for medicine, there is no money for proper food. *The hand of death is here.* Poverty claims its victim.

Every week hundreds of innocent children are murdered by poverty in New York City alone. Are the children to blame for the existence of poverty? Their parents may be shiftless, but must their children suffer death because of the parents' lack of thrift? Would you call it justice should the law electrocute you because your father happened to be a poor man? That is exactly what the laws of society decree—only that it substitutes disease for electrocution. For every man slain in battle ten thousand little babes are murdered by poverty.

Millions of dollars are spent by this Christian Government in maintaining a Bureau which investigates and combats diseases of domestic animals, such as horses, cows, sheep and pigs. But not one cent is spent by our Government in investigating or combating the diseases that carry away the children of the poverty-stricken brother. And yet this is a Christian nation, a Christian Government, a Christian people!

Christ gave this advice to a certain rich young man who was desirous of finding the Kingdom of Heaven: "Go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor." There are tens of thousands of rich men to-day who have no intention of giving what they have to the poor, and yet they hope and pray that Christ will make an exception of their cases and that they will be among the elect when Gabriel blows his trumpet. They try to overlook the command of Christ and tack above their desks the advice of St. Paul, "Hold fast that which is good." Of course, if Christians should follow Christ's command, we might greatly minimize the poverty question, but since there is not one rich Christian in ten thousand who has any intention of obeying it, the absurdity of such advice is apparent.

We need a practical solution of the poverty evil. We want to see to it that babes born to the poor are given a chance to live. We want to see to it that their little lungs are permitted to breathe pure, fresh air. We want to see to it that the babes of the poor are properly fed, properly clothed, properly educated. We want to see to it that the poor child has as good a chance as has the child of the rich. Put them on a par, as far as advantages and equipment are concerned, and you will have solved the poverty question. As it is to-day, in this Christian city and nation, hundreds of children are allowed to die every day for lack of a few cents' worth of pure milk. Aged women, unable longer to "earn" their daily bread, are permitted to starve to death in bare and

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unhealthy hovels, for want of money with which to purchase the bare necessities of life. Aged men, forced from ill-paying positions by other men, younger and stronger, are permitted to freeze to death on our streets, for want of money with which to procure shelter and clothing.

A catholic religion would strike a blow at poverty, but Christianity, instead of opposing poverty, tends to increase it. Who contributes the $380,000,000 given in America each year for the support of religion? Is it the rich man on Fifth avenue? Those versed in the affairs of national church statistics will tell you that the dollar-a-day man, the two-dollar-a-day man and the three-dollar-a-day man contribute three-fourths of the total amount. The class that really needs the money with which to purchase the necessities of life contributes the widow's mite to support the minister, to hire the choir, to meet the running expenses of the church and to pay Brother Jones's board bill over in Hongkong.

And why is this money needed? Simply to keep poverty away from Christianity itself. And why should we keep poverty away from Christianity? *Because poverty would kill Christianity.* Without the money with which to sustain itself Christianity would fall flat. It would be tried by a commercial world and railroaded to State's prison for vagrancy. Without the money which the Church of Christ wrings from the poor, by threatening eternal damnation for refusal, the Bible would in a few years time be put on the second-hand shelf and labeled, "Fancies and Foibles of the Christ-Man."

I maintain that a God-given religion would not need the widow's mite with which to sustain itself. It would rather tell the widow to keep her mite to procure food, clothing and shelter. Not only this, but a God-given religion would see to it that the widow did not suffer from lack of the necessities of life.

III. CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

It was a law among savages that death be the penalty for murder. It is also the law among civilized peoples. Even among those nations where Christ's divinity and philosophy are taught and believed in we find the old law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Christianity is on record as a supporter of capital punishment. Rev. R. S. Lawson, pastor of Ainslie Street Presbyterian Church, Williamsburg, says: "Men who take the life of another should meet the fate of their victim." Rev. Dr. Harris, of Temple Israel, New York City, says: "The exigencies of society make capital punishment a necessity." Rev. G. F. Glover, chaplain of St. Luke's Hospital, New York City, says: "Capital punishment is a necessity; there is no reason why leniency should be shown the murderer." Bishop Potter says: "Nothing wrong is being done in electrocuting a man for murder; no clemency should be shown." I quote these remarks from a few well-known clergymen to prove that the sentiment even among those supposed to be consecrated or set apart by divine will is in favor of the old doctrine of a life for a life. I might go even further and cite hundreds of instances where the Church of Christ not only sanctioned capital punishment, but has even acted the part of judge and executioner.

I maintain that capital punishment is wrong in theory and barbaric in practice. I further claim that a catholic religion would look with horror on the suggestion of compounding a crime. If a man steals another man's life we are compounding that crime by stealing his life from him, and before the bar of common sense we are as guilty as he. Because a man commits murder we have no right to murder him. Capital punishment tends to lower the popular estimate of the value of life.

A man who deliberately takes the life of a fellow-being is mentally weak. He is lacking in mind. This mental deficiency may be inherited, or it may be the result of some mental disease. Psychology tells us that our brains are as liable to disease as our bodies, and the slightest derangement of a few brain cells may result in changing a man of gentle habits into a vicious criminal. Our brains are extremely delicate mechanisms; thousands of ideas and atoms of knowledge are stored away among their minute compartments or cells. And each cell is responsible for its share in maintaining the stability of the brain as a whole. Suppose an insidious disease breaks out among a certain group of cells (this disease is sometimes so unnoticeable as to be unappreciated), the complexion of those cells is altered to a greater or less extent and often rendered useless.

Generally speaking, a mature man's mental condition is determined by his lines of mental concentration. For instance, a man does you an injury; you concentrate your mind on the fact; the result is that that portion of your brain in which the cells lie that have to do with that fact is plentifully supplied with bright, red blood fresh from the arteries that lead from the heart. Those cells become live with action, they increase in number and size. Concentration on the fact will in time cause the entire brain to become affected. People say we are "brooding over it," "or taking it to heart." Long-continued concentration on the fact will in time result disastrously to us, either physically or mentally. Sometimes people "waste away" physically, as a result of mental concentration upon the fact of an injury, and death by consumption or heart disease results. Or this mental concentration may allow the brute nature within us to become dominant, and we commit suicide or do murder. A criminal is a human being with a mental disease. It is an error to suppose that he is wilfully vicious. He is a sick man. Send him not to the electric

chair but to a prison hospital, where efforts will be put forth to improve his mental condition, and confine him there until he is cured, and no longer. This may mean life imprisonment for some and a shorter period for others.

If a man murders another, he is at least partly excusable, in that he was mentally unbalanced; but what excuse have we, intelligent men, for putting him to death? Do we benefit the murderer's victim? Do we benefit the murderer? Do we benefit ourselves? Then, what right has a custom to existence if it is not of some benefit to somebody?

There is another argument against capital punishment, more important, if possible, than that of mental debility. *What becomes of the murderer after we kill him?* The Bible states that he goes to hell. If such is the case, don't you think that since the murderer is already judged and convicted by the Supreme Power, we can afford to let that same Supreme Power also decide the date on which the murderer shall begin his punishment in that horrible, seething furnace of eternal fire? Should we not rather sympathize with the poor fellow, knowing that he is doomed, and that there is no chance for him to escape the awful punishment? Lock him up if you will, scourge him, spit on him, but for the sake of decency don't tear the life from his miserable body.

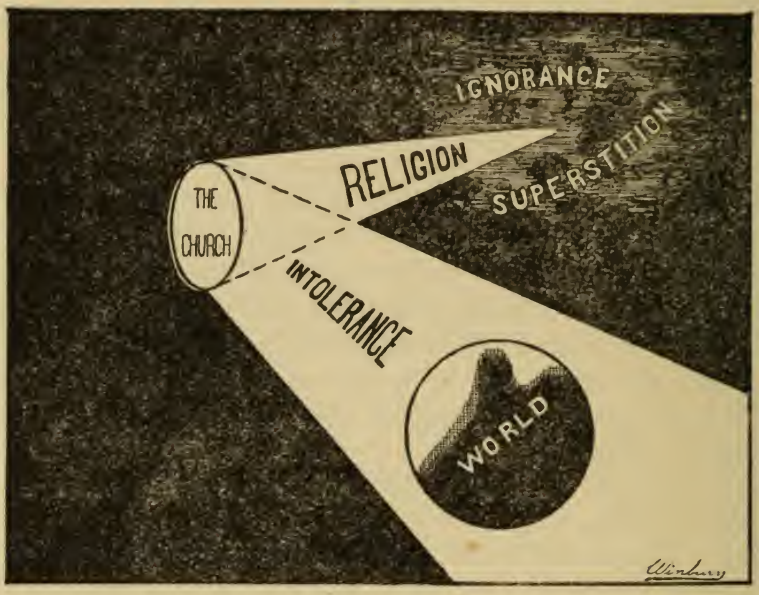
I have given you the Bible's version of the penalty for murder. But I do not intend to say that this version is correct. If we are to acknowledge the facts of the new psychology we must doubt if a man has a soul. If such should be the case, the Biblical idea is erroneous and it leaves the question of the murderer's ultimate end unanswered. *We don't know what we are doing when we take a man's life, legally or otherwise.* We don't know what it means to deprive a man of his natural share of existence. We don't know the destiny of a criminal. We are a set of ignoramuses dabbling in a mystery. We

are self-appointed avengers, dealing out a punishment of which we know not the depth. We are doing unto others that which we "hope to God" will never be done unto us. When a poor, unfortunate fellow commits a crime, while suffering from imperfect mentality, we wave the red flag and cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!" And where is Christianity on this question? Look among the rabble that vociferously announce the popular verdict; look among the high priests that teach the rabble what to think and what to say. There they are—Christians all of them—brothers of Christ and propagators of the new, the great, the grand, the glorious "universal religion."

The blackest criminal that ever walked the earth is a brother—unfortunate, ill-advised or hasty—but still a brother. He has at least a germ of human feeling within his hardened exterior. The duty of humanity is to cultivate that spark of unselfishness, or sympathy or love, and do for him as we would that others would do for us were we similarly situated. We are all criminals at heart. We can all recall times in our lives when we would have committed some overt act if circumstances had "demanded it." Let us therefore not only forget and forgive, but reclaim the weak brother. A catholic religion will display prominently among its doctrines a demand for the discontinuance of capital punishment.

IV. INTOLERANCE.

Millions of people have been run through as a result of technical differences among Christians. Disputes over what Christ said and over what Christ meant have resulted in the deaths of a sufficient number of Christians to fill comfortably a medium-sized heaven and hell. Ever since the death of Christ "sects" have been continually forming, each claiming to have the only true knowledge as to what Christ meant and as to what he did not mean. And each sect, with the Bible in one



YOU who have followed the public discussion in regard to Martin Luther, which has been going on for some time in the columns of the New York *Globe,* will perhaps agree with me that intolerance is one of the fruits of Christianity. One Roman Catholic writer accused the Protestants of being poor "misguided fools." And Protestants have replied in kind. Protestant historians have been quoted to prove that Luther was all that is pure and noble, while Roman Catholic historians have been quoted to prove that Luther was the most corrupt mortal with whom the world has ever been cursed. The idea seems to be not to state honestly the true character of the man, but to support partisan claims. Roman Catholics vilify Luther because they were *taught by their fathers* that Luther was vile. And Protestants honor Luther because *their fathers* taught them that Luther was a chosen vessel of the Supreme Power. The truth in regard to Luther, and other important matters, will never be known because both sides are willing, if need be, to lie to support their religions! The sources of religion are ignorance and superstition. The "authoritative" truths are gathered and reflected on the world and effectually prevent a true universal brotherly feeling. When will thinking men realize this truth?

hand and a sword in the other, has gone forth to save or to kill, as seemed more expedient. The religious wars which have continually devastated Europe since the time of Martin Luther were the most horrible, brutal and revolting possible. Torture, assassination and criminal villainy on one side have been pitted against torture, assassination and criminal villainy on the other.

The wars of ancient Rome were, at least, conducted from a semi-civilized standpoint, but what can we say of those who participated in the bloody wars between the Christian sects of Europe, when not only were the men slain and the women thrown to wild beasts, but the children spiked and thrown upon the dunghills? Is humanity a pack of ravenous dogs, and is Christianity a bone of contention cast in their midst by an unscrupulous overseer?

The two great factions of Christians, Roman Catholics and Protestants, are, even in this late day of religious liberty, continually fighting like dogs and cats. The Catholics say that the Protestants are surely going to hell, and the Protestants say that the Catholics have got the thing twisted. Both say: "Heaven was made for us, and hell was made for the other fellows." Both of these Christian factions are apparently honest, earnest, conscientious and aggressive; but both are intolerant and exclusive in the extreme. The Christian Church is composed of a mass of warring atoms. Religious prejudice and bigotry are taught in our Sunday-schools and preached from the pulpits. There are, all told, three hundred different creeds or shades of religious belief in the United States at the present time, and each is expending time, money and energy in disparaging those who differ from it in technicalities.

All of these sects "look forward" to a brotherhood of man, but according to their own ideals. The Baptists think that such a brotherhood is impossible until all have become Baptists. The Catholics say that the

brotherhood of man will be a reality when the Papacy has silenced all opposition. The Mormons are working for a universal brotherhood in which Mormonism shall be supreme. The Presbyterians tell us that a brotherhood without the Westminster Confession would be impossible. Each sect is hoping, working and praying for the dawn of the brotherhood of man, but each insists on bossing the job. There are already three hundred prominent candidates in the United States alone for the honor of being boss, and the number is fast increasing. Ten years hence the number may be increased to five hundred, and one hundred years hence there will probably be as many as twenty-five thousand, until finally every man will have a private technical creed of his own, unless in the meantime we wake up to the fact that religion, with its trouble-breeding possibilities, is the one great deterring element that effectually prevents the fusion of a universal brotherly feeling.

Let us earnestly consider this matter. Can I not love my neighbor, regardless of whether I believe in Christ's divinity? Can I not share my income with the poor and helpless, regardless of whether I believe in the existence of a heaven or a hell? Can I not visit the sick, encourage the unfortunate, cheer the despondent and care for the fatherless, regardless of whether I believe in a personal "God"? Does the absence of a religion prevent me from being a brother of man? I shall continue to do unto others as I wish others to do unto me. I reiterate and I firmly believe that if a man thinks and acts right he will live right, and that if a man lives right he will die right, and that he need have no fear whatever in regard to any future existence into which he may pass after death—if, indeed, the grave be not the end of man.

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